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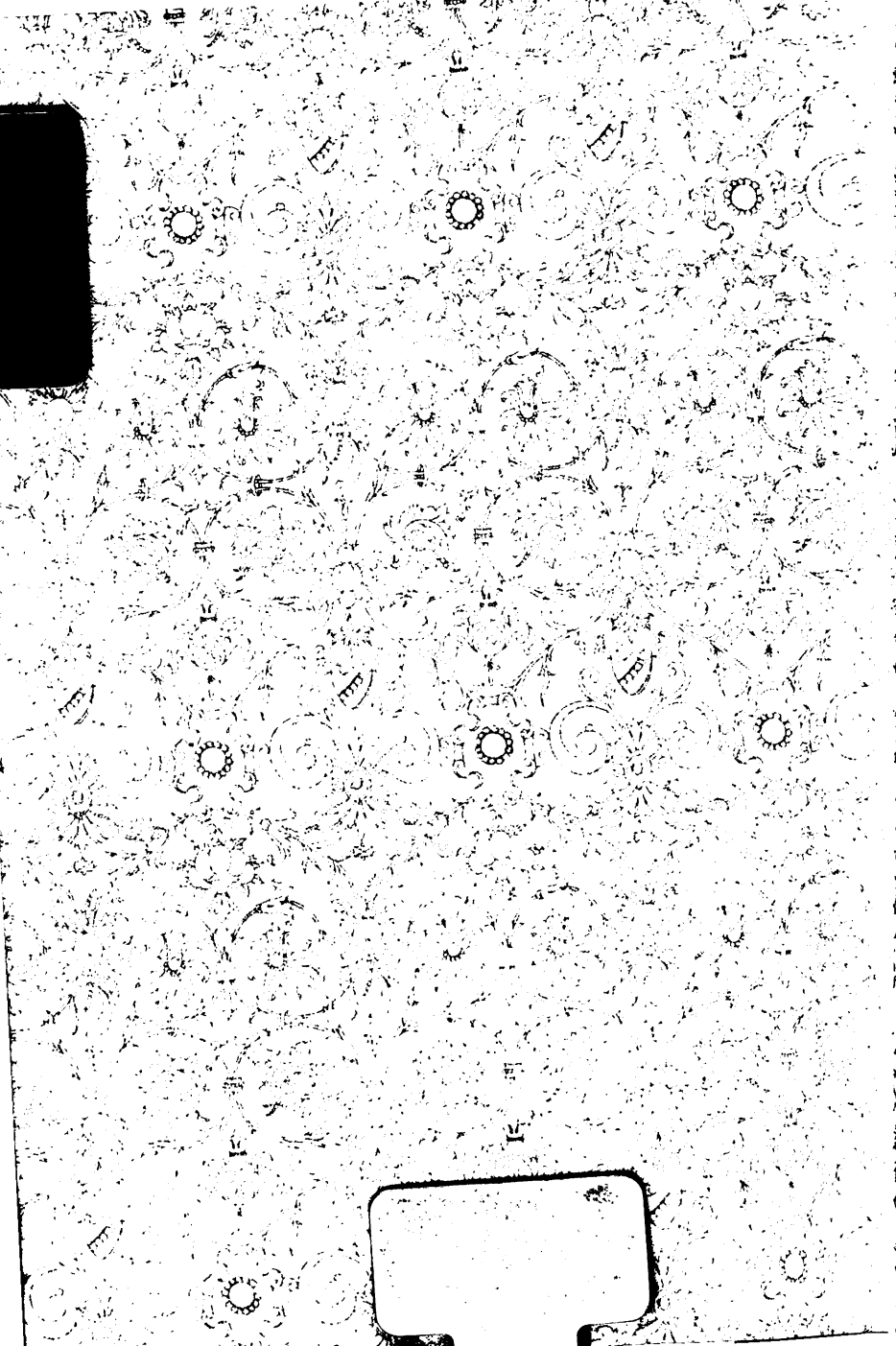
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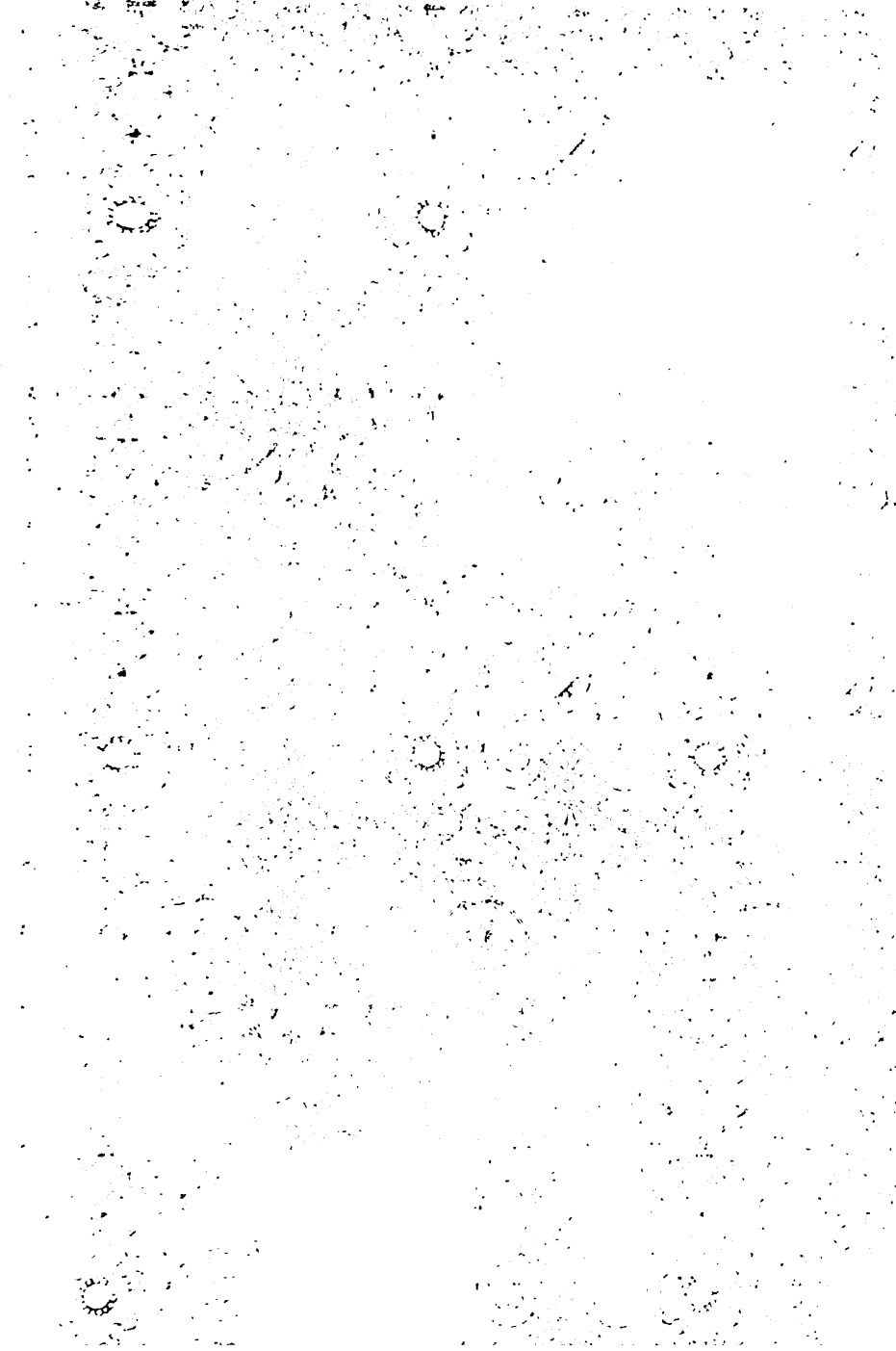
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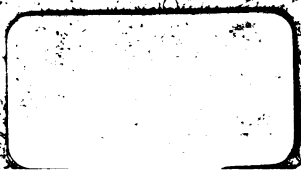
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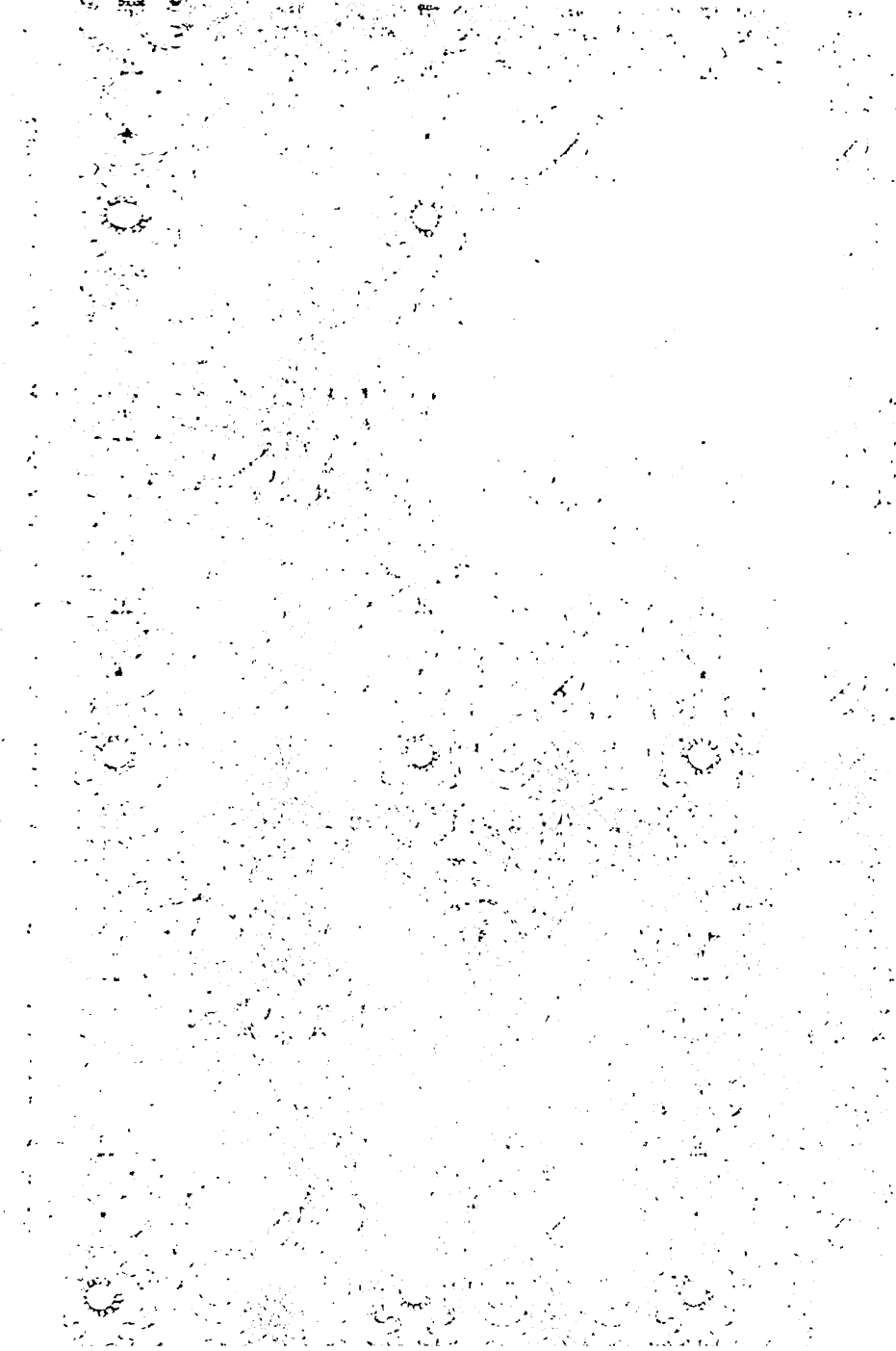
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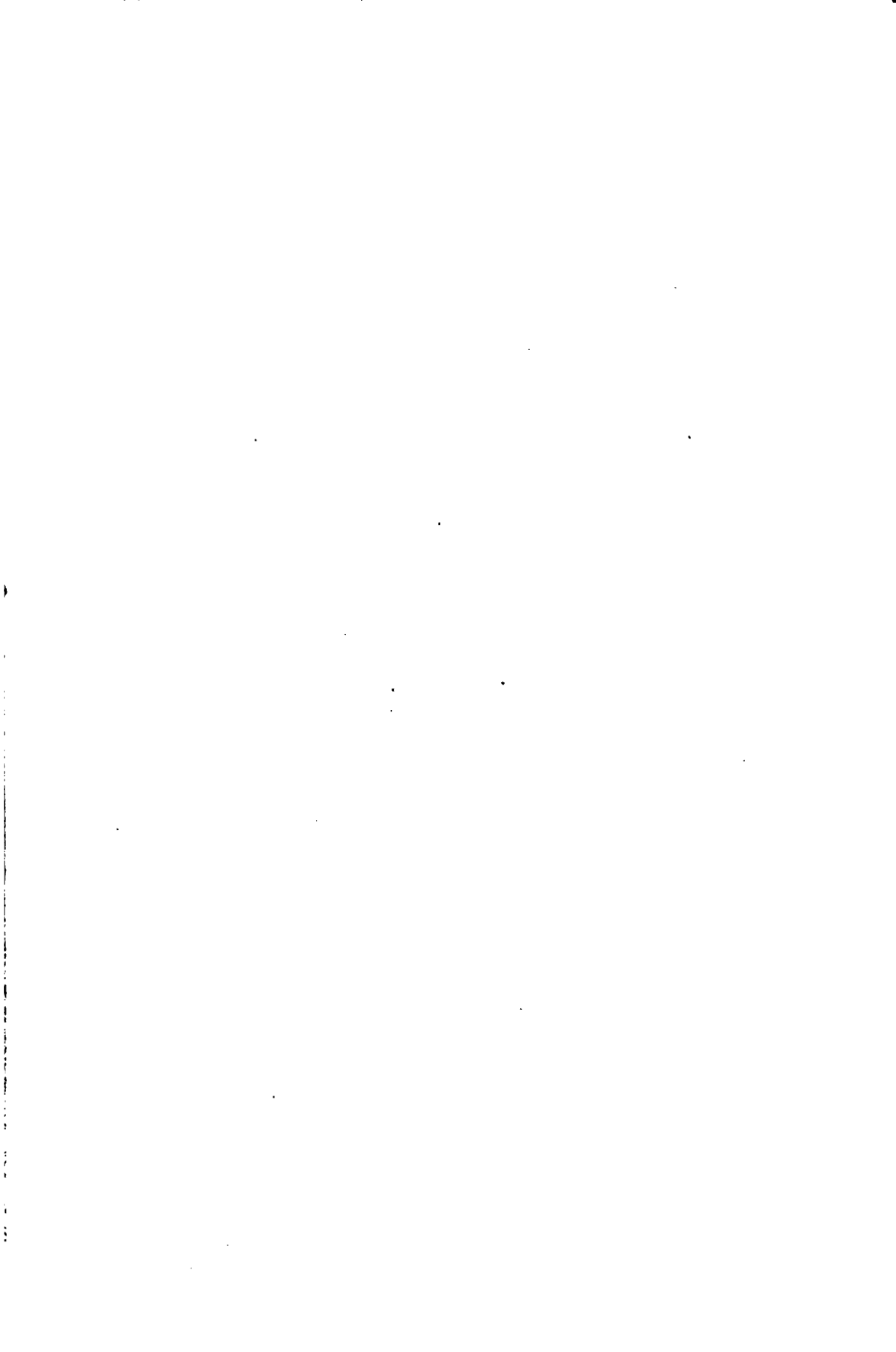












# RAINBOW GOLD

VOL. III.



# RAINBOW GOLD

*A NOVEL*

BY

DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY

AUTHOR OF 'JOSEPH'S COAT' 'HEARTS' 'A MODEL FATHER' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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# RAINBOW GOLD.

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## BOOK V.

### *HOW THE RAINBOW GOLD ELUDED TWO ADVENTURERS.*

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#### CHAPTER I.

ON a bright and springlike day in early March, Aaron Whittaker was standing near the mouth of the new mine, which, according to his own declarations, was so soon to enrich everybody who was connected with it. His features were twisted into a disgusted sneer, and he bit angrily at a piece of straw, ejecting the successive morsels from his lips with a look of increasing distaste. A greasy man coming to the door of

the engine-house looked up at the bright sky, looked round at such part of the landscape as the raw mounds of earth and waste allowed him to see, and shouted to Aaron that it was beautiful weather. Aaron cursed the weather, and kicked at a small stone. The small stone turned out to be fast-rooted, and hurt his toes, and he swore with more energy than before. Then he went on biting at the piece of straw as if he had a spite against it.

By-and-by a bell rang in the engine-house. The greasy man retired from the doorway and disappeared. The little tin pot of a boiler began to hiss and snort, and the pulley on the tripod at the top of the shaft to revolve. Aaron turned his back to the shaft and strolled away a yard or two, then took a resolved step, then stopped as if to think, and finally turned reluctantly to face the shaft. He did this in time to see the head and shoulders of a man swing upwards. The engine stopped, and the man, with one foot in a big metal bucket and one hand grasping the rope by which he had been

drawn upward, swung in the air and hailed him.

‘ Give us a hand, Whittaker.’

Aaron advanced to the edge of the shaft, and extended his hand. The other grasped it, and, the engine being reversed so as to let out some two or three yards of rope, he swung easily to land. He was a sturdily built fellow, coarsely dressed, but with a voice and bearing expressive of good breeding.

‘ Well?’ said Aaron, looking at him somewhat shiftily, and then glancing round as if to make sure that nobody was within earshot.

‘ Well?’ said the other.

‘ Don’t be a fool, Morley,’ said Aaron viciously. ‘ Out with it.’

‘ Oh,’ replied the stiff-set man, ‘ I won’t be a fool if you won’t.’

‘ Out with it. What sort of a report are you going to make?’

‘ You’re on the wrong tack, Whittaker. That’s my private advice to you.’

‘ You mean the mine isn’t worth working?’

asked Aaron. He stooped to pick up a bit of straw that lay at his feet and began to twine it round his fingers.

‘Yes,’ said the other, ‘I mean that, and perhaps a little more than that. I thought you’d make a mess of things when you took them into your own hands, whether you found coal or no. But I didn’t think you’d want to make this sort of mess.’ Aaron said nothing, but his face began to take an odd mottled tinge, its natural pink and white no more appearing smoothly, but breaking into little patches. ‘Come,’ renewed his companion, ‘let’s have it out. You didn’t look as if I was very welcome when I came this morning.’

‘Why shouldn’t you be welcome?’ asked Aaron. He stole a look at his companion, and, meeting a pair of very bright and penetrating eyes, shot his own away from them, and fell to biting the straw ring he had wound about his forefinger.

‘You want me to think that you’re a fool, do you?’ Aaron stole another look at him.

‘Why shouldn’t you be welcome?’ he asked. ‘The mine’s going on well. It’s dry and it’s safe. The yield’s good, and the seam’s thickening every yard.’

‘Yes,’ said the other, dryly, ‘the yield’s good, and the further you go the thicker the seam gets. But whose coal is it?’ As he put this question he drew near suddenly, and tapped Aaron on the chest. ‘Come now, whose coal is it?’

‘Ours,’ said Aaron. All the little pink spots had disappeared from his cheeks and he was as white as a sheet.

‘Look here,’ returned the professional man, brusquely; ‘don’t fool with me, if you please. You’ve been outside the limit of your land this two months. Was that what you started on the very edge of your own property for? Did you think of getting a dip into your neighbour’s stuff when you began?’

‘No, I didn’t,’ replied Aaron, with feeble bluster. ‘I wanted to be as near the canal as I could. I expected to save three or four

pounds a week in carting if I had a wharf close at hand.'

'That may be as it may,' said his companion; 'but you're into your neighbour's property now, and if it happened to be your own you'd be on the way to a good thing no doubt. It happens, unluckily for you, that you've dropped on to the very edge of it, that's all.'

'I say,' said Aaron, 'isn't there any chance on the other side? On the north?'

'Well,' said the other, 'so far as I can make out, you seem to have looked there for yourself. The plain fact is the fault slopes like the roof of a house. As it runs up the seam thins. You've dropped on to the thin end. As for the upper seam it isn't worth the getting.'

There was a lengthy pause, and Aaron, still biting at his ring of straw, shot a shifty glance every two or three seconds at his companion, who was engaged in shredding a piece of plug tobacco with a pocket-knife.

'Morley!' said Aaron, suddenly. His voice

was choked and husky, and he cleared his throat. 'Morley!' he said again.

'Well?' returned Morley, rubbing the cut tobacco slowly between the palms of his hands.

'It isn't as if the other side had sent you.'

'What isn't as if the other side had sent me?'

'Why—it isn't as if old Whitehouse had sent you to see if we were on the square and keeping our own boundaries, you know.'

'Oh, isn't it? Why isn't it?' Mr. Morley seemed peculiarly resolved to have his tobacco fine, and he picked all the larger fragments to pieces with great assiduity.

'If I made it worth your while——'

'If you made what worth my while?' Morley rounded his mouth into an O, and looked at Aaron sideways.

'To hold your tongue,' said Aaron.

'Yes?' He produced a well-blacked meerschaum and filled it tenderly. Aaron looked right and left. The greasy man was sunning himself at the engine-room door,

smoking and lolling against the doorpost thirty yards away.

‘How long do you think it will take White-house to get up to where we are?’ he asked, in a half whisper.

‘That isn’t the question,’ replied the other. ‘How long will it be before your men know where they are?’

‘Oh,’ returned Aaron, ‘they won’t know anything.’ Morley’s face drew into a sneer, but he was turning away from Aaron to nurse the flame of a lucifer-match between his hands, and the look passed unnoticed. ‘The thing’s been done a hundred times,’ said Mr. Whit-taker, sinking his voice, with a side glance to the engine-room.

‘How do you know it has been done?’

‘It has been done,’ responded Aaron, ‘scores and scores of times.’

‘You don’t mean to say,’ said Morley, ‘that old Bache is in this. And old Round. Do they know what you’re up to here?’

‘No,’ said Aaron; ‘that’s where it is.’

‘Oh!’ Mr. Morley’s manner was dryer than the desert sand. ‘That’s where it is, is it? And it’s been done before, has it, scores and scores of times?’

‘Why, everybody knows it’s been done,’ replied Aaron, with some show of impatience.

‘Yes,’ said the other, and then paused for two or three swift whiffs at his pipe, looking keenly at Aaron meanwhile. ‘Everybody knows it’s been done, but *how* does everybody know it? It’s always been found out.’

‘I’ll take my chance of that,’ said Aaron, ‘if you’ll keep dark.’

‘If I keep dark? That’s all very well. But I am to send in a report. What am I to say?’

Aaron took him by the coat sleeve and said in a voice reduced almost to a whisper :

‘Tell the plain truth about everything—but——’

‘Yes. But?’ said the other.

‘Put the coal on the north side.’

‘Ah!’ Mr. Morley put his hands into the

pockets of the coarse pea-jacket he wore, and stared at the ground. 'You think,' he said, 'that you could make it worth my while?'

'Yes,' said Aaron, eagerly, 'I could.' He bent nearer. 'Will a hundred pounds do?'

'No,' replied the surveyor; 'not enough.'

'A hundred and fifty? Come. Don't press an old friend too hard. A hundred and fifty?'

'No,' said the surveyor again; 'not enough.'

'I can't go further. Two hundred?'

'Not enough.'

'Why, man alive,' cried Aaron, desperately, 'what *do* you want?'

'You can't make it worth my while, you see,' said Morley, still staring at the ground.

'Well. What do you want? Open your mouth. I can see you're likely to open it wide enough.'

'I've made up my mind to the sum I am for sale for,' said Morley. 'I've made up my mind, Whittaker'—he raised his head and looked Aaron full in the face—'that if ever I am

to be a rogue for money I won't make less than a million sterling by it. I think that resolution's likely to keep me pretty straight. You've been wasting your time, you know. That's what you've been doing.' Mr. Morley said this with a certain air of banter, but his virtuous indignation mastered him. 'Who the devil, sir, told you that I was for sale for two hundred pounds? A hundred! That's what you offered me to begin with. They'll give more than that for a nigger in America. You're a fool as well as a scamp, Whittaker. When you try to buy a man's honesty next time, you offer him a decent price for it. It'll be a good deal more agreeable to him, and you'll be less likely to have your head punched. Here!' cried Mr. Morley, falling into a sudden mimicry of Aaron's manner, 'you give me your worldly reputation and your immortal soul, and I'll give you half-a-crown. You ever dare to speak to me again, and I'll kick you as far as I can follow you.'

'I say, Morley,' cried Aaron, seizing him

by the pea-jacket as he started to leave the field. 'I beg your pardon. I do indeed. I—I didn't mean—— I say, Morley, don't go yet. I'm half mad, begad I am. You don't know what a mess I'm in.'

'Loose my coat,' said Morley, wrathfully, 'or I'll knock you into the middle of next week.'

'No, no,' cried Aaron, clinging to him almost wildly. 'You didn't understand. You didn't really. Look here, Morley. What I wanted was to keep it dark for a little while—only a little while. You don't know what a mess I'm in. You don't; upon my word you don't.'

'I know as much as I care,' said the other, standing doggedly still, and looking straight before him with eyes half closed and his lower lip stuck forward. 'Loose my coat.'

'I say, Morley. For God's sake don't send in for a day or two. Give me a day or two to turn about in. Morley, old fellow, look here. You know I always liked you, Morley, and we were always chums and all that.'

‘You’ve got yourself into a mess,’ said Morley, relenting a little in his inmost heart, ‘and you must get yourself out of it as best you can. On your own side you might as well chuck money in the sea as try to work it, and on the other side it’s a simple dead robbery. That’s all. You loose my coat.’

‘I *have* got myself into a mess,’ said Aaron, still clinging to him. ‘You don’t know half the mess I’m in. Look here, Morley, I beg your pardon, I do indeed. I say, don’t send that report in for a week. I’m—I’m ruined, any way,’ he concluded; and holding on with one hand to the lappel of Morley’s coat, he groped with the other for his handkerchief.

‘I don’t know half of it!’ said the offended mine surveyor, relenting more and more. ‘Well, so much the worse for you. I can’t help you.’

‘Yes, you can,’ said Aaron, sniffing behind the handkerchief. ‘If I had a week I could work round.’

‘Work round what?’ cried Morley, losing

his temper again. 'You can't put the coal back. You can't pay Bache and Round the money you've made 'em fool away on this mule-game of yours. Not that there wasn't a chance of finding coal,' he muttered; 'only you've gone bouncing so that everybody will be delighted when you've come to grief.'

'Morley,' said Aaron, blowing his nose with violence, and then appearing from behind his handkerchief, 'it's a thing that might have occurred to anybody.'

'What—to miss finding coal? Yes. But then it might have occurred to an honest man to tell his partners the truth, and not to go lying and bouncing about his find, and putting his hand into his neighbour's pocket to make his lies look good.'

There are some people who can pour out torrents of anger and still have whole deeps in store within them, but this young man had spent his wrath already and was beginning to be pitiful.

'I won't dig another ounce weight of

‘Whitehouse’s coal,’ said Aaron, ‘I won’t indeed. And look here, Morley, I’m sorry I asked you to do that ; I am indeed. But I’m half mad, and I hardly knew what I was saying. I didn’t really. But will you give me a week, Morley ? It isn’t much to ask, when you can ruin a man, and—and ’—the handkerchief came into play again—‘and break his heart.’

‘Rot about breaking his heart,’ said the surveyor ; but he was melting.

‘I was go—going to be married to old Round’s granddaughter,’ sobbed Aaron. ‘You know what a man her father is.’

‘Ah!’ replied Morley, feeling bound to sustain his character for severity, especially since he was on the point of yielding. ‘You’ll make a nice husband for any fellow’s granddaughter.’ Aaron kept silence under his friend’s disparagement, and stayed behind his handkerchief. ‘I don’t see what good I’m going to do you,’ the surveyor began to grumble. ‘I don’t see what you want a week for. You don’t want to cut and run?’

‘Cut and run!’ said Aaron; ‘what is there to cut and run for? Even if Whitehouse hears about it, he can only bring an action to recover damages.’

‘Well, what do you want a week’s time for? Mind you, I draw up my report to-day, and it goes in this day week. I’ll have no more humbug.’

‘No,’ said Aaron, ‘I won’t ask you to delay an hour beyond the week.’ He had not the remotest idea in the world as to what he should do to extricate himself from this terrible scrape, but his faculties as a practised life-long liar came to his aid, and soothed him mightily. ‘I’ve got two or three irons in the fire,’ said Aaron. ‘The one thing’s a failure, and I must make the others pay for it. I can’t pay everything all at once, but if I can let ’em have five hundred apiece it’ll keep ’em quiet till I can turn round further. I don’t intend to let ’em lose a penny by me. I never did. I——’

‘I wouldn’t say any more if I were you,’ said Morley, with infinite dryness. ‘My report

goes in this day week, mind. And if there's another skip-load brought to bank between now and then I'll tell Whitehouse straight. Now we understand each other.'

The surveyor departed, and Aaron, sitting down upon a little mound of shale, pondered on the situation. Suddenly he bethought him of the engine-man, and gazing about him, was relieved to find that the engine-house was hidden by the intervening mound of waste. He had not begun to use his handkerchief, he remembered, until Morley and he had passed the edge of the mound, and were out of sight. As for what had happened before, that might mean anything.

He felt cruelly that he had spread a net for himself. Had he been content to admit that the mine was a failure the thing would have been over, and though everybody would have been disappointed, and he would have had to bear the brunt of his partners' anger, he would have escaped his present dilemma. He did not despair, for he had a week before him, and

many things might happen in a week. What he expected to happen he did not know, but something would intervene, or something might intervene, and in the meantime he was saved.

What could he do? How could he mitigate the coming storm, or hide himself from it? Job Round had never liked him, and would be only too delighted to find a chance to send him adrift. He had lost Sarah, then? He wept to think so, but he was helpless. What *could* he do?

The sound of voices startled him, and, fearful of being seen just then, whilst his face and eyes betrayed him, he rose and walked away across the fields, choosing the road where at that hour of the day he was least likely to meet inquiring eyes.

He asked himself, naturally, what those two old fools, his partners, meant by mistrusting his management. They could leave him alone until the moment came when, after all their disbursements, they had received a dividend, and then they must needs stickle for a monthly

examination of the mine by that confounded snob of a Morley, whom Aaron had always hated, now that he came to think of it. Five-and-twenty years ago Parliament vexed itself less than it does now about mines and miners, and a good deal of the coal-getting of that district, and probably of most others, was done by rule of thumb. Aaron had been doing capitally by rule of thumb, with the aid of half-a-dozen experienced old hands and two or three dozen young ones, and nothing but the accident of the coal being on his neighbour's ground instead of on his own had prevented his operations from achieving the most flourishing success. As for poaching—well, his neighbour's mine was a mile away; there was not a man in his own employ who understood the use of the dial; nobody but himself had known that he had exceeded his own boundaries, and in all probability the thing might have been allowed to go on for a year or two but for the employment of the snob Morley. Long before detection could have come about he would have

been safely married. Ezekiel's fortune, known to be considerable, would have fallen into his hands in due time, and that hidden fortune of Job Round's would have followed it. With these windfalls, or with only one of them, he could have closed the mine, and have left the owner of the disembowelled ground to his remedy at law. It would have been easy, after working to a certain distance, to have discovered that he had reached his boundary, and to have informed his partners of that fact.

Revolving a hundred tricks and turns in his mind, with the full confession that they were useless now underlying all his thoughts of them, he walked himself into an outward appearance of tranquillity. A stranger passing him might have guessed that he was out of temper, but his guesses could scarcely have pierced deeper.

There was no disguising it—he began to find it necessary to tell himself so to keep the thing in his mind at all—he was in a mess. Morley had talked about running. Well, what

was there to prevent him from running? To begin with—his mother's fortune. Then—Sarah! Sarah would believe in him. Sarah would accept any colour he chose to put upon his own proceedings; but after the exposure that was coming her father would be inexorable, and against her father's will she would not marry him. On the other hand, why should he run? What had he to run away from, and what to run to? Plenty to run away from, beyond a doubt, but little enough to run to. If he only knew the whereabouts of that buried treasure now!

He set himself idly to think of the means by which the secret of Job's hidden hoard might be surprised. He poisoned Job, simply and purely as an exercise of fancy, and searched amongst his papers after marrying Sarah. Then he went away and dug up the treasure. He drugged Job, again simply as the exercise of a vacant fancy, and found the guiding document whilst the big man slept. Then again he went away and dug up the

treasure, and this time came back wealthy to marry Sarah, and to compromise with Ezekiel and Bache and Whitehouse, and no man had the slightest fancy—Job least of all—as to how he had enriched himself. Then Job, seeing his daughter safely married, went away in turn, and found his treasure cave empty. After that a variety of things happened. Job shot himself in despair. He did not shoot himself in despair, but, suspecting Aaron, came back and shot *him*, after which he escaped to a wild life in foreign places, or—which was better—was caught and tried and hanged.

Then, and still to charm an empty idle fancy, supposing he had the clue to the buried treasure, how could he get out to it? Where were the necessary funds to come from? He sold the mine, representing it as his own sole property, but could produce no title-deeds, and so could get no pay. He sold the yield of coal for the next month and got paid partly in advance. No! He presented a bill in the names of his partners and himself, or a cheque

for the firm, got it cashed, and was away. Then, when he had the treasure, he negotiated through a confidential solicitor to pay everybody, keeping abroad meanwhile.

It was all futile—all childish—all absurd. He knew that well enough; but these fancies did to play with, and the realities of his own position were too dreadful to be faced.

He had been strolling for an hour, and except that he had kept himself sufficiently awake to outward things to choose the most sequestered ways, had gone almost without thought of the road on which his footsteps took him. He could hear the sound of a hedger's shears beyond the bend of the lane, and looking about him discovered that he was in the immediate neighbourhood of General Coningham's residence, the Warren. Three miles from home, then. He was tending homewards, and might as well go there as anywhere. He rounded the bend in the lane, and looked up as he passed, at a man in corduroys, and a smock frock which was tucked to his waist.

The fellow was clipping the hedge with great industry, and Aaron was looking away from him again when he noticed the curious fact that the man had a thin ring of gold wire in his ear.

‘Hillo!’ said Aaron, pausing. ‘What brings you here?’

‘For the matter o’ that,’ replied Mr. Bowling, turning round upon the questioner, ‘what brings you here? You mind your business, young governor, and I’ll mind mine!’

## CHAPTER II.

GENERAL CONINGHAME had found a purchaser for the Warren, and was making ready to shake the dust of Castle Barfield from his feet. He wondered why he had ever persuaded himself to attempt to settle down there. Gentlemen were extremely rare in the neighbourhood, and the people who filled their places were coal-owners and ironmasters, grandfatherless persons whose manners smacked of mine and foundry and counting-house. The common people were simple savages, and in the contemplation of them the General, in his superior mind, experienced a shuddering disdain. Their manners had not that repose of submission to the will of their betters which Coningham loved to see amongst the lower orders, and had actually found at its best and most peaceful growth in

India, where the poor heathen knew better how to behave himself than did his white brother in Castle Barfield.

When the General had bought the Warren and its surrounding Leasowes he had thought them dear. Now that he came to sell them he thought that an absurdly low value was placed upon them. He got a hundred or two more than he gave, but it was demanded of him that house and grounds should be put into perfect order. Early as it was, therefore, the house was surrounded by workmen ; and bricklayers, paperhangers, painters, and glaziers had everything in an abominable litter. Coningham stayed on and worried the men as much as their presence worried him. As for himself, he was so driven about that at last he found himself with only one place to sit in—unless he invaded the servants' quarters or went into his bedroom—a little summer room which opened on the lawn at the back of the house. He sat here one day when he heard through the open door, as he smoked his morning cigar and read his news-

paper, a conversation which deeply interested him.

Another person who was deeply interested in this same conversation was Mr. Bowling, whose presence in the neighbourhood of the Warren asks for a word of explanation. Mr. Bowling's temper, never of the sweetest, had been so completely soured by the constant contemplation of his wrongs that he became insupportable to his employer. He had received a week's wages and his dismissal, and, after being drunk as long as his money lasted, had sought new employment, and had found it at the Warren, where for a week or two a roughly handy man was in request.

The bricklayers had been repairing the garden wall, and had left, after the manner of their kind, a great heap of rubbish and débris behind them. Mr. Bowling was leisurely shovelling a part of this into a wheelbarrow, a dozen yards away from the open glass door of the General's room. The General, hidden by the curtains, sat within the room, and smoked

and read, pishing and pshawing to himself at the uninteresting character of the news, and midway between the two an old man and a young one were at work, the old one painting the woodwork of a window and the young one pumice-stoning the blistered paint of the neighbour window.

‘I reckon,’ said the ancient, who was withered like a rosy old apple that has lain for months in the straw, ‘I reckon, Isaiah, thee doesn’t remember Jabez Harget.’

‘I knowed his widdler,’ said the younger man, stopping his work awhile to fill and light his pipe.

‘Dids’t?’ said the withered ancient, stopping work also and leaning on his ladder. ‘Her used to say about poor ode Jabez, “Tek him in the main,” her used to say, “and you’ll find him bad all round!” Now, that wa’n’t quite true about Jabez, but it’s true about this cove.’

‘Which cove?’ asked the younger man.

‘This sojer fellow,’ said the old man. ‘This Ginerol. Chap as lives here.’

Mr. Bowling had not smiled so delightedly for many a day as he now smiled. He had seen the General enter the room and seat himself, and as these words were spoken he saw a newspaper flutter to the ground, and saw also the slippered feet of the gallant gentleman, which lay visible beyond the edge of the flowing curtain, comfortably folded the one over the other, suddenly withdraw as if at the touch of a red-hot poker. Mr. Bowling was not much of a humourist, but the fun of this situation was plain to him. He expected the General to emerge at once, but the comedy of which he was the sole observer was prolonged.

‘Reuben,’ said the younger man, ‘how comes it as a man can be a gineral and ha’ no more pluck in him than this chap makes a show on?’

‘Money and Merit is two lads as is likely to thrive,’ replied the ancient. ‘Together they flourishin’ like the green bay tree of Scriptor. Separate ’em, and Money’s just as

lusty as iver, but Merit gets as thin as a skull and cross-bones.'

'Gaffer,' said the younger man, turning on his ladder to seat himself, 'thee beest as full o' bywords as a red herrin's full o' little bones. How dost come by 'em?'

'Natur,' said the elder, 'natur. Notions is like dandelion seed, lad. They fly here an' thither, and it's as like as not as hundreds on 'em dies for lack of nourishment. But when they fall on a fat brain they tek root, lad. When thee'st finished, I'll beg a pull at thy pipe, Isaiah.'

'Beest welcome,' said Isaiah, politely wiping the stem of his clay pipe on his trousers before handing it over. The two ladders were just within arm's length. The old man accepted the pipe, and turning round on his ladder as his companion had done before him, sat down, hugged his thin old knees with his veined and knuckly hands, and settled himself for a comfortable spell of idleness.

'A sojer without valour, lad,' began the

ancient (to the great delight of Mr. Bowling, who had begun to fear that the General was forgotten), 'is like a bad half-crown. He runs under fire. He's like a bad egg in a dishful of good 'uns. Looks just as good as the rest on 'em till it comes to blows, and then he's a stench in thy nostrils.'

'Goo it, gaffer!' said Isaiah; 'I wish he was by to hear thee.'

Mr. Bowling laughed silently, and sat down upon one of the handles of his wheelbarrow.

'I wish he might be,' replied the unconscious ancient. 'They do say as he fled in the war afore the Roosians.'

'No, no,' said Isaiah; 'Lord Raglan 'ud niver have sat idle by and let that pass. No, no. They'd ha' kicked him out, gaffer; they'd ha' kicked him out.'

'I'm told, lad,' said the elder, 'as Mr. Round said as much to his face the night they made a bonfire of his fences.'

'He'd be rare and wroth at that, I reckon,' returned the younger man.

‘Wroth?’ said the ancient with a chuckling cough. ‘I seed him i’ Castle Barfield High Street yesterday, an’ who should pass him i’ the road but Mr. Round. My back was turned on Mr. Round, and I was facin’ the Gineral. Gad-zook, lad! thee shouldst have seen his eye. He looked as wicked as a trapped weasel. I turns me round to see who he was lookin’ at i’ thatnin, and theer was Mr. Round a smilin’ at him as cheerful as a child. He ketches me up wi’ them great legs of his’n in a minute, and I meks bold to say, “Mr. Round,” says I, “if eyes was razors,” I says, “you’d ha’ been pretty clean shaved that time.” He turns round o’ me, and, “Hillo, old Truep’ny! beest thee above ground yit?” says he; “Drink my health,” he says, and he gi’en me half-a-crown.’

‘He’s as free-handed a man as iver lived,’ said Isaiah. ‘I painted his house from top to bottom last ’ear. He never thought o’ letting me walk home to dinner, and he’d come out wi’ a mug o’ beer regular of a evening.’

‘I’ve knowed him,’ said the ancient, ‘since he was that high.’ The extended hand was some fifteen feet from the ground, but the old boy meant to indicate the height of his own knee. ‘He was allays ventersome and bold, but rare good-hearted. Theer’s them as calls him hard, but they are them as has no savin’ knowledge of human natur. What do you think he gi’en me that half-crown for? Not for me to drink his health in wantonness. He knows as half-a-crown is worth two shillings and a sixpence to a aged man like me, as has to work for his livin’ at the scriptural time of three score year and ten.’

‘He’s a good sort,’ said Isaiah. ‘A good sort.’

The conversation was no longer so interesting to Mr. Bowling as it had been, though it still had a flavour of fun so long as the General listened. But he had almost made up his mind to begin work again, when he began once more to be interested. Anything that related to Job’s history had a fascination for Mr. Bow-

ling, the more perhaps that he was forbidden to talk of it.

‘I mind him leaving Castle Barfield,’ said the ancient. ‘The talk run at the time as he’d ’listed i’ the Life Guards, but, as far as I mek out, that was no more than a rumour, as rose most likely from his bein’ more than common tall. What’s thy age, Isaiah?’

‘I’m six-and-twenty next June,’ said Isaiah. ‘What dost fly off at the handle like that for?’

‘He went away the week as thee wast born,’ said the old man. ‘’Struth! is it, six-and-twenty ’ear ago? I shouldn’t ha’ believed it. My blessid! It looks like yesterday. He had a kick-up with his feyther, an’ off he went, hot-foot.’

The General was standing upright, with his hands clenched and his pale blue eyes enlarged and staring. He would have given a thousand pounds to be able to ask a question and to secure an answer to it. He forgot the rage he had felt a moment before at the old man’s

insolent allusions to himself. He forgot everything, in short, but John Smith and the renewed certainty that he and Job Round were one.

‘He wa’n’t long away,’ said the younger man. ‘That strappin’ wench of his is nigh on twenty, ain’t her? That’s a fine figure of a gel, gaffer.’

‘Thee hast rayson, lad : thee hast rayson,’ said the oldster. ‘Her’s th’ apple of his eye. It’s like a picter to see ’em together. Him that big and stalworth, and her that tall and lithe. The rose o’ Sharon, lad : the rose o’ Sharon.’ The old fellow sat sucking at the borrowed pipe for a time, and Mr. Bowling, with a backward ear, attentive for a possible renewal of talk, began to shovel some part of the heap of rubbish into his wheelbarrow. Nothing further happening just then, he filled the wheelbarrow and trundled it away.

General Coningham listened from within, but heard no more. The ancient, having finished his smoke, returned the pipe to his

companion, and the two resumed work in silence. It was impossible to secure a continuance of their talk, but the one fact about the date of Job's departure had so renewed his old certainties, and had awakened so passionate a desire to know more, that he was half beside himself. He withdrew noiselessly but in great agitation from the room, and, gaining his own chamber, changed his indoor costume for coat and boots, and sallied out into the Leasowes, resolved on intercepting the old man and questioning him. It puzzled him at first to think how he could begin the conversation without a tacit acknowledgment that he had overheard the morning's talk, but by-and-by he saw his way.

The workmen engaged at the Warren were in the habit of taking their meals at a little public-house which stood some two or three hundred yards away from the western entry to the Leasowes, where the men had the use of a fire, a room, and knives and forks, in consideration of their expenditure on beer. It was

already near the time for the midday meal, and the General walked on the path they would shortly take. This path was near a hedge, and on the other side of the hedge Mr. Bowling was already seated to open a handkerchief containing half a loaf and a number of broken scraps and ends of meat and bacon. The habits of Mr. Bowling were becoming daily more and more unsocial, and, for the most part, his fellows knew his reputation, and were willing to leave him to the solitude he loved. Seeing his employer for the time being approaching, and knowing what a martinet he was, and how likely to make a disturbance in case he found a man stealing so much as a minute of his time, Mr. Bowling, who had appropriated a good ten minutes, prudently slid into the dry ditch and there ate and drank in peaceful silence, whilst the General paced up and down.

The clock of the old church sounded the hour of midday across the fields, and the workmen came trooping along the path on which the General walked. Almost last among them

came the withered ancient, and him the General accosted.

‘Wait here a moment,’ said Coningham. ‘I have something to say to you.’

Mr. Bowling peered through the hedge, and catching sight of the old fellow, grinned his broadest.

‘You’re a going to have a tongue-walking, you are,’ said Mr. Bowling within himself.

The ancient, having no suspicion that his speech had been overheard, and not being very likely to care even if it had, awaited composedly. Coningham, seeing that one or two of the men had still to pass, walked back into the house and stayed there a minute. Then seeing, as he fancied, a clear field for operations, he advanced. Mr. Bowling, secure from observation, listened to his returning footsteps, and grinned afresh, in anticipation of a pleasing scene. The General’s first words took him by surprise.

‘I passed you in the High Street yesterday, I fancy.’

‘Yes,’ said the ancient. ‘You did so.’

‘A minute afterwards you spoke to a man with a great red beard—a man named Round.’

‘Yes,’ said the ancient a second time, ‘I did so.’ He thought perhaps that Coningham had overheard his speech to Job and was about to rate him for it. As a guard therefore against any unphilosophic swiftness of reply he pulled a stick of tobacco from his pocket, and biting a biggish piece from it began to chew it. This, like smoking, is an operation which can be employed to slow down the rapidity of speech.

‘Have you known this man Round for any length of time?’ demanded Coningham. The ancient considered awhile and saw no reason against telling the truth.

‘All his life,’ he said.

‘You knew him,’ asked Coningham, ‘before he left home six-and-twenty years ago?’ The ancient considered once more, and again saw no reason against telling the truth.

‘I knowed him well.’

‘Do you happen to know the exact date of

his leaving home? Was it five-and-twenty years ago last June?’

The old man began to consider within himself. Job Round was an old friend and benefactor of his. General Coningham was an enemy of Job Round’s, and was not likely to ask for information concerning him for any friendly purpose.

‘I could ask him,’ he answered, ‘and mek sure in a minute.’

‘I don’t want you to ask him,’ said Coningham, who saw that the old fellow was fencing with him. He was so savagely eager that he determined on breaking through his fence at once. ‘I suppose you remember the dog he took away with him—the bulldog—Pincher.’

Pincher, thought Mr. Bowling to himself. That was the name of the dog that John Smith used to talk about, the dog the officer had poisoned. John Smith was a deserter. Bonaventure had held something over everybody, and that was the thing he held above John Smith, now Job Round, Esquire. Was this

the officer who poisoned the dog, and was Mr. Bowling himself on the eve of a discovery?

‘The dog?’ said the old man in answer to Coningham’s question. ‘I never seed him with a dog in all his life.’

‘You can hold your tongue I suppose?’ said the General, looking about him, and sliding his hand into his pocket. ‘Here is half-a-crown. Find out for me, quietly, the name of the dog Job Round took away with him when he left Castle Barfield, and there is a sovereign waiting for you.’

‘You’m no friend to Mr. Round, governor,’ said the ancient when he had secured the coin. ‘May I mek bode to ask what you wantin’ to know that for?’

‘Never mind what I want it for,’ returned Coningham. ‘What harm is it likely to do Mr. Round if I find out the name of his dog?’

‘That’s more than I know,’ said the old man.

Coningham took out his purse, and counted five sovereigns into the palm of his hand.

‘Keep your own counsel,’ he said, displaying these, ‘and find out what I want to know. You can do it easily. There are scores of people who are likely to remember the dog if you remind them of him. Come to me when you can prove that the dog’s name was Pincher, and there are five pounds waiting for you.’

It is within the bounds of possibility that if the old man had known anything of Pincher, so large a bribe might have tempted him, but it is certain that he would have resisted a larger bribe if he had known how much hung upon the answer to that simple and innocent-seeming question.

‘Maybe I’ll earn that money, gaffer,’ he said aloud, but added inwardly, ‘Maybe I’ll get as much from Mr. Round. If it’s worth your while,’ thought the old fellow, ‘to know it to his hurt, it’s worth his while not to have you know it.’

‘Very well,’ replied Coningham. ‘Hold your tongue. Find out what I want to know, and these five pounds are yours.’

‘I’ll bear it in mind, gaffer,’ said the ancient. Coningham contented himself with a nod in answer, but showed him the gold once more before sliding it back into his purse. Then, with the purse still in hand, he stood watching the old artificer’s retreating figure.

‘If I could prove it,’ said Coningham aloud, ‘I would give a thousand pounds.’ And with that he too walked slowly away, leaving Mr. Bowling behind the hedge unseen, in a very vertigo of wonder.

Roughly, he knew Job’s story. He knew that Job had enlisted and had deserted. He knew the story of the dog, and the rest was within an easy leap—a leap so easy indeed, that any man who did not suffer under an actual mental paralysis must needs have taken it involuntarily. This was the officer the desperate John Smith had almost strangled in the presence of the court-martial, and had knocked down before his men? If this were true, Mr. Bowling had been near revenge at least for many months, and had never guessed it. Being

himself a deserter of six-and-twenty years' standing from a man of war, Mr. Bowling could argue to Job's fear of detection from what his own had been. If it were true (and he had self-possession left to know that he might have lighted on a mare's nest) there might be more than mere revenge in store for him. That buried hoard after which his soul yearned might come into his fingers after all. He had dreaded Job's warnings and they had kept him silent, but he would have no need to dread him any longer if General Coningham were really the man he fancied.

He ate his dinner with meditative slowness, and his thoughts gave a dreadful relish to it. At one o'clock he went back to his rubbish heap, and having finally dealt with it, was sent to his hedge-clipping at the garden. And there, as if the devil had primed them both for mischief, Aaron Whittaker, driven desperate, and Mr. Bowling, savage for vengeance and the buried treasure, met together.

## CHAPTER III.

‘THERE’S nobody on the other side of that hedge, is there?’ asked Aaron in a mysterious whisper, stealing near to Mr. Bowling.

‘No, there ain’t,’ said Mr. Bowling discourteously.

‘I want to speak to you,’ said Aaron. ‘I’ve got something to say to you that’ll be worth your while to hear.’

‘You haven’t got nothing to say to me,’ returned Mr. Bowling, ‘as I’m in the least degree greedy to listen to, I do assure you. I’ve had about enough of you. What do you come a-worrying me for?’

‘Look here,’ said Aaron, taking hold of a massive bough in the hedge, and swinging himself up to the seaman’s side by it, ‘do you want a share of that money?’

‘What money?’ asked Mr. Bowling with a curse.

‘You know what money,’ returned Aaron, still speaking in a whisper. ‘You want a share of it, don’t you? Well, so do I.’ Mr. Bowling faced about and stared at him. Aaron’s face was wild and white.

‘Very well,’ said Mr. Bowling; ‘go and ask them as knows to it where it is, and then take a pick and a shuffle, and set to work and dig it up. That’s your lay, young man.’

‘You think I come from Mr. Round, don’t you?’ demanded Aaron, hoarsely and rapidly. ‘You think he’s mad enough to trust me with his secret? Not he? I found it all out myself. Don’t you see, you fool, that you and I could work together?’

‘Don’t I see, you fool?’ said Mr. Bowling in elegant repartee. ‘Yes, I do see, you fool.’

‘Look here,’ whispered Aaron; ‘I’m in the most cursed mess that ever man got into. I can get about Round’s house whenever I want to. If you know where to look for that paper,

or what it's like, it's a hundred to one I can lay my hands upon it.' You help me, and I'll help you. We could share and share alike.'

Again the man faced round about, and stared at him. Aaron met his scowling inquiry without shrinking.

'I've got my head screwed on pretty tight at present,' the scarred man said, nodding at him twice or thrice, 'and I'd rather keep it where it is. When I want it screwed off my shoulders, I'll let you know.'

'You cursed coward,' snarled Aaron, 'can't you tell when a man's in earnest? Look at me.' Mr. Bowling was doing that with all his might. 'I'll tell you I'm in a mess. I'm desperate. If Round found out the mess I'm in he'd kick me out of his house. He'll know it in a week's time for certain. You help me, and I'll use that week to a purpose. Why shouldn't we both be rich for life? If you knew where the paper was, with the latitude and longitude, and could lay your hands on it, wouldn't you do it?'

Mr. Bowling dropped from the mound into the road, and Aaron followed his example.

‘This here,’ said the seaman, taking him by the coat with both hands, ‘is getting past a joke. I won’t be tortered in this sort o’ way not for forty Joby Rounds. Go back and tell him yes. If I knowed wheer to lay my hands on that theer latitood an’ longitood I’d do it, if had to tear ’em out of his inside. I’d do it if I had to chop him into little bits and search each mossel. So now you’ve got that much, you go an’ tell him.’

‘Tell him!’ said Aaron, half with a groan and half with a snarl; ‘I tell *you* I’d do the same. You think he’s a friend of mine! He hates me like poison.’

‘You’re a-going to wed his daughter, ain’t you?’ demanded Mr. Bowling. Aaron groaned and turned away.

‘No,’ he said. ‘No chance of that for me.’ He had been crying already that day, and the tears found their way to his eyes anew. ‘I tell you,’ he said, in a rage to which his whisper

gave a remarkable intensity of expression, considering how flippant and vacuous a young man he had always been until now, when his tongue began to awake his passions, and his passions began to awake him ; 'I tell you that within a week he'll kick me out of his house if I dare to show up there, as I never shall. Can't you see? Can't you tell when a man's in earnest and when he's making believe?'

'You march in front o' me,' said Mr. Bowling; 'that way, a hundred yards ahead you march. When you hear me whistle, you turn to the right. When you hear me whistle again, you stop. This is no place to talk of these here matters. March.' Aaron hesitated, and looked at him with some bewilderment. 'March,' said Mr. Bowling again; and half automatically, he turned in the direction indicated by the seaman's outstretched hand, and walked down the lane.

Aaron was one of those curious, but by no means uncommon people, whose whole spiritual forces seemed to be controlled by the tongue,

if the tongue is not the actual seat these forces occupy. It might be interesting to inquire into the first secret spring of unconscious action which in the case of such people sets the tongue going. The commoner method is to think a thing and then to say it. Aaron's method was to say a thing and then to think it. If he gave his thoughts no tongue he seemed to have no thoughts, and it was only after a tolerably forcible utterance of them that his emotions began to stir in him. He knew by observation, by reading, and perhaps, in a faint dim sort of way, by intuition, the emotions proper to most of the varying circumstances of life, and when the circumstances arose he expressed those emotions—generally in an exaggerative way—and the emotions, being thus verbally taxed and called upon, yawned, and awoke, and stretched themselves. When once they were fairly awake it must be admitted that they atoned for their customary sluggishness, and gave their owner the prettiest possible exhibitions of agility.

Until Aaron had seen Mr. Bowling and had spoken to him, his thoughts about the buried treasure had been dreamily speculative. His thoughts about the dangers and disgraces which threatened himself had been dreamy and speculative. But now he had given them tongue they awoke, they dilated, they grew in muscle and activity, until they created a sort of internal earthquake with their gambollings.

One consequence of this spiritual peculiarity of his was that he passed for a young man of rather more than average feeling, because when he talked tears it came natural to weep a little, and when he talked wrath or courage he could grow mightily fiery and red in the face, and wondrous martial within doors, so that to the observer (and even to himself) he would seem ready to face dragons. Another consequence was that he was given to be somewhat melodramatic in manner, and to express himself with a distinguishing absence of the sense of measurement in words. But this, having once been mentioned, must be taken for granted for the

most part, because Aaron's conversational style at such moments is only to be reproduced on paper by a writer who allows himself the freedom of the modern Parisian school, and English readers who admire M. Zola would be very properly shocked to find his liberties emulated by an English story-teller.

With all his emotions wide awake and engaged in the most sprightly feats of ground and lofty tumbling within him, Aaron walked straight along the lane until Mr. Bowling's promised whistle turned him to the right, where a mere cart road, deeply rutted, led between the leafless hedges to the open fields. The rut-marks continued up a gentle hillside, and this being climbed Aaron saw a tumbledown little building, half cottage, half hut, where, as he afterwards learned, Mr. Bowling, for the nominal sum of eighteen-pence a week, was permitted to nurse his love of solitude. The second whistle stopped him at the door, and he looked fearfully about him to see if he were observed or followed by any other person than Mr.

Bowling. Job Round had suddenly begun in a very remarkable manner to permeate space for Aaron Whittaker, and to lurk in a dozen concealments at once.

Mr. Bowling came up with his exaggerated nautical roll, and producing a great rusty key inserted it in the rickety complaining lock, and opening the door, motioned to Aaron to enter. The young man obeyed his companion's gesture, and found himself in a room floored with bricks like a stable, and lighted by one small window pierced high in the wall. A small bare table with half-obliterated signs of green paint upon it rested one foot upon a brick. A cane chair, with the back broken away and the seat in a condition of staring shockheadedness, stood near the table, a forlorn grate full of dead ashes lifted its brick shoulders in a shrug of cold discomfort, and a sailor's chest stood in one corner.

Mr. Bowling, having withdrawn the key from the outside, locked the door from within, and walking straight to the chest, fell upon his

knees before it, threw it open, and began to rummage with both hands amidst its disorderly contents. By-and-by he arose, holding at arm's length a misshapen thick little volume towards Aaron.

‘Tek your hat off,’ said Mr. Bowling. He threw his own battered billycock into a corner, and what with the Old Father Time forelock and the bald forehead, which showed strikingly pure and white in contrast with the coffee brown of his complexion where the sun and wind of many years at sea had stained it, he looked almost venerable. Aaron obeyed him, and laid his own hat upon the little table.

‘This,’ said Mr. Bowling, opening the misshapen volume and fluttering its leaves with both thumbs, ‘is as right and proper as if you was in a police-court or Old Bailey Sessions. It’s got the testyments in it. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Ax. Look at it yourself; see it’s all right.’ He handed the book to Aaron.

‘Yes,’ said Aaron, beginning to see that

Mr. Bowling intended him to be sworn, 'it's a Bible.'

'See as it's complete. Look at it,' said Mr. Bowling.

'It's all right,' returned Aaron, fluttering the leaves.

'Very well then; hold it in your right hand. Now then, say these here words after me: "I hereby swear as I will do fair doos along of William Dean, otherwise known as Thomas Bowling. If I betray the aforesaid William Dean, otherwise known as Thomas Bowling, to Joby Round or any other man, or if I fail in anyways to do fair doos with William Dean, I wish I may be damned. So help me God." Now kiss the book—not your thumb, mind!—kiss the book.'

Aaron having repeated this formula, with some verbal alterations dictated by his own finer sense of responsibility towards the Queen's English, kissed the book and handed it back to Mr. Bowling, who threw it into the chest and slammed the lid down after it, with no super-

fluous display of reverence for the magic qualities with which he appeared to gift it in his own mind.

‘Now you’ve swore,’ he said, ‘and now you know what you’ve got to expect if you try to come any hankypanky dodge with me.’ Aaron nodded seriously, and at the dogged scowling resolution of his companion experienced an inward quaking. ‘Now then,’ said Mr. Bowling, ‘what is this mess as you’ve got into?’

‘I went into partnership,’ said Aaron, ‘with Mr. Bache, your master——’

‘Empl’yer,’ said Mr. Bowling; ‘I don’t own such a thing as a master. Cap’n I have not an objection to, because, aboard ship, somebody must rule.’

‘With Mr. Bache, your employer,’ said Aaron, accepting the correction, ‘and Mr. Ezekiel Round, Job Round’s father. We sank a mine, and it turned out to be good for nothing. You wouldn’t understand it unless I made a map to show you.’

‘Here’s a piece o’ chalk,’ returned Mr. Bowling. ‘Draw a map on that there table.’

Aaron obediently took the piece of chalk, and by a simple diagram made the matter clear to his companion’s apprehension. He related the gist of the morning’s talk with the mine surveyor, and Mr. Bowling nodded now and then to signify understanding.

‘Sit down,’ said the seaman, when the story was complete. Aaron sat upon the broken chair, and Mr. Bowling took a seat upon the table. ‘I’m a-going,’ he said, looking down at Aaron, ‘to do a dangerous act, and you are a-going to do a dangerous act. Do you see this?’ He traced the scar upon his face with the finger which had lost a nail. ‘That’s a specimen of Joby Round’s handiwork, that is. Do you see it?’ The ugly thing was not difficult to see, and Aaron said as much. ‘Very well, then,’ said Mr. Bowling, ‘now you know what you’re a-facing, and you’ve got to say to yourself, “Have I got the pluck, or have I not, to go through with this here business?”

That's what you've got to answer, yes or no.'

'I'll go through it if I begin it,' said Aaron.  
'You leave me alone for that.'

'I ain't a-going to tell you now,' resumed Mr. Bowling, 'where and in what manner Joby Round keeps what you and me wants to find. I ain't a-going to tell you that afore to-night. I mayn't tell you even then. I've got one thing to settle first.'

'We're not going on a wildgoose chase, are we?' asked Aaron. 'You are certain that the treasure's there?'

'I see it afore it was buried,' replied Mr. Bowling, with heavy emphasis. 'I know to a dead certainty it *was* buried, and I've got it from Joby Round's own lips as it's never been unburied. I am as certain it's there as I am certain I'm standing here alive.' He rose to his feet and spread both hands abroad. His eyes shone with a wild light, and beneath his tan crept a singular pallor, which was succeeded by a crimson flush. 'I know it's there.

There's no shadow of a doubt as it's been found. There ain't a house for miles and miles. There ain't a living thing, unless a fox, or a wolf, or a bear, as treads that ground from year to year. It's a desert, that's what it is—a desert.'

'Then,' said Aaron, 'why should we lose an hour?'

'I ain't a-going to lose a minute,' returned Mr. Bowling. 'Fair and soft goes far. I know what there is in front of me, and I mean to be safe afore I start. Look here; you be here at eight o'clock to-night. It's as dark as pitch by then, and nobody'll see you coming. If Joby Round knew as you and me was laying our heads together, he'd scent us in a minute. Now I'll see if the coast's clear, and you can get away.'

'And what are you going to do this afternoon?' demanded Aaron.

'Never you mind what I'm going to do this afternoon,' said Mr. Bowling. 'Perhaps I'm a-going to earn enough to carry me out there,

You'll have to get money to start with; you can't go to the Bawlkans for nothing, mind you.' He opened the door, turning the key in the rusty lock with a long slow creak, and peered out of doors. Then, returning to the room, he picked up his wideawake, dusted it on his knee, punched it into some approach to its original shape, and, sallying out, made the tour of the cottage, surveying the fields on all sides. 'You can get now,' he said, re-entering; 'the coast's clear. Eight o'clock to-night; then I may tell you something.'

Mr. Bowling, as he appeared in the presence of Job Round, was altogether a different person to the Mr. Bowling who appeared before Aaron Whittaker. A mongrel in the presence of the game dog who has beaten him, and that same mongrel in the presence of a smaller dog whom he knows that he can beat, exhibits much the same peculiarities of bearing. The scarred, swaggering, coffee-coloured braggadocio was terrible to Aaron, though in the presence of his master he could be meek enough. To do

Mr. Bowling's force of character the justice it deserves, Job Round, and a certain French adventurer who called himself Hercule Asmodée Bonaventure, and who long since disappeared from these pages, were the only men who had ever inspired him with a genuine fear. He had recognised the strong hand of authority now and then perforce, and had bowed to it, but those two men only had ever been Mr. Bowling's real masters.

In a case like this, even physical proportions go for something, and though Aaron was a well-proportioned and sturdy fellow, he was no match for his new comrade, who was a man of great width and weight, and carried no more fat about him than a greyhound. Altogether, Aaron had found his master, and though he did not like to think so, he knew it perfectly, and was disposed to tender obedient service. Nobody, however, who has done anything like justice to the young man's character will accuse him of intending—on anything less than sheer compulsion—to divide the treasure with Mr.

Bowling, and before Aaron had left his companion half an hour, he had mapped out half-a-dozen ways of getting rid of him, in case he should once reveal his secret.

Mr. Bowling had been absent without leave, and in ordinary circumstances of the like sort, was wont to assume a sulky and defiant swagger, but he walked back towards the scene of his recent labours with a slow and thoughtful air. His hedger's gloves and shears lay under the hedge where he had thrown them down on leaving the spot with Aaron. He took them up, looked at them contemptuously, and smiled.

'I shan't use you no more,' said Mr. Bowling. He climbed the fence, entered the Leasowes, and swinging the gloves in one hand and the shears in the other, marched on leisurely towards the Warren. Arrived there, he made his way to the servants' quarters, and rapped at a door. A groom who happened to be idling within responded to his summons. 'My respectful service to the governor,' he

said, throwing the shears and the gloves down together, 'and I should like to see him.' The groom smiled.

'Oh!' said he. 'And what might *you* want to see the governor for?'

'When I've done my business along with your governor, young man,' responded Mr. Bowling calmly, 'you can ask him what I wanted him for. My respectful service to the governor, if you please, and I should like to see him. You may think it odd, perhaps, but the governor'd like to see me just as much as I should like to see him. I'm here with a special message.'

'What's your name?' asked the groom.  
'Who do you come from?'

'My name's Tom Bowling. As for who I came from, that's for your governor's hearing. No, you needn't shut the door. My respectful service to your governor, and Thomas Bowling has something to say as he'll be pleased to hear. I've got particular news for him.'

'I'm not going to send a message like that

from a man like you,' returned the groom ; ' it isn't likely. Oh, there's the General across at the stables ; you can go and speak to him, and take your chance. That's no affair of mine.'

Mr. Bowling turned him about, and crossed the paved yard to where the General stood, pointing something out with his cane to a stable underling, who plainly trembled before him. Coninghame turned round as the newcomer drew near, hat in hand, touching his grizzled forelock with a tattooed knuckle.

' Well,' said Coninghame sharply, ' what do you want ?'

' My respectful service, sir,' returned Mr. Bowling, ' and I should like a private word with you.'

' Well, what have you to say ?' Mr. Bowling glanced round at the underling, who was still near at hand. ' Speak out,' said Coninghame.

' My respectful service, sir,' repeated Mr. Bowling once more, touching the grizzled forelock a second time, ' I should like a private

word. 'With regards, sir, to a bulldog of the name of Pincher.' He muttered the last words in a tone so low that they did but just reach the General's ear. Coningham started, and for a second or two absolutely glared at him.

'Come this way,' he said, when he had partly recovered from the shock Mr. Bowling had given him. He walked rapidly down the yard, pushed open the gate by which Mr. Bowling had entered a minute or two before, and came upon the field beyond. 'Now,' he said, suffering the gate to fall back into its place, 'what have you to say to me?'

'I may have come here in a error,' said the seaman, twisting his billycock in both hands, 'but are you in want of information with regards to a bulldog of the name of Pincher?'

'What do you know of the dog,' inquired Coningham, 'and how do you come to suppose that I want information?'

'I know a good deal about the dog,' returned Mr. Bowling. 'If it's the same dog, I know the man that owned him. Look here,

governor. With my respectful service, I'm going to ask a question. Was you ever struck by a man calling himself John Smith, as owned a bulldog by the name of Pincher?'

Coninghame's pale blue eyes glittered at this inquiry, and Mr. Bowling knew before he heard the answering words which followed that he was not there upon an idle errand.

'I was assaulted by such a man,' said the General.

'Was you afterwards, saving your presence, three parts killed afore a court-martial by that same man?'

'I was a second time assaulted, in the presence of a martial court, by the same man,' replied Coninghame. His frozen blue eyes glittered like icicles in the sunlight, and the hands that bent his cane across his breast trembled, though ever so little. 'Go on,' he said; 'you say you know the man?'

'I've cause to know the man,' said Mr. Bowling, purposely tantalising the other's suppressed eagerness. 'That's his trademark;' he

indicated the scar. 'I've carried that for five-and-twenty year. I know him, never fear.'

'Well?' said Coningham, cutting at the air with his cane. 'Well? You know the man?'

'Excuse me, governor,' Mr. Bowling went on slowly, 'if you know who that man is, and if you can prove it, will he be locked up safe, out of the way of doing harm?'

'I will answer for that,' responded Coningham. 'You need be under no apprehension for your own safety.'

'Very well then,' said Mr. Bowling, with a deliberative air; 'what may it be worth your while to pay for what I can prove?'

'I will give,' replied the General, surveying his man, and balancing his own passion of eagerness against the fellow's humbleness of dress, and his probable desire to be revenged, 'I will give—ten pounds.'

'Oh!' said Mr. Bowling, staring at him broadly. 'You said this morning as you'd ha' give a thousand pound to know about the dog.'

Look here, governor, strike the iron while it's hot. Take me while I'm here. I'll put that man into your hands, and I'll do it for a hundred pounds, but not a penny less.'

'Who told you I would give a thousand pounds to know about the dog?' asked Coningham.

'Why, you did,' answered Mr. Bowling. 'I heard you when you was the other side that hedge. You was labberd o' that there hedge, and I was stabberd, and says you, "I'd give a thousand pound to know about that dog," you says.' Coningham took a pace or two away, and then came back again. 'I'll do it for a hundred pounds,' said Bowling, 'but not a penny less.'

'You shall have your hundred pounds on the day of his conviction,' answered the General.

'That won't do neither,' said Mr. Bowling. 'I must have that hundred pound down the minute as you've got your proof. I shan't appear again him, I shan't show at all. I shall be thousands o' miles away afore he's tried.'

‘You can put proofs into my hands?’ demanded Coninghame. ‘What sort of proofs?’

‘I can tell you where to find two men alive in Plymouth now—men as knowed Johnny Smith intimate, and can swear to him. I can tell you where to find a man, alive in Plymouth now, as heard him tell the tale and threaten to have the life of the man as killed his dog. You know who that was, governor?’

‘You are growing a little too familiar, my good friend,’ said the General, shaking off the tattooed hand Mr. Bowling had laid upon his arm.

‘Will them proofs serve your turn, governor?’ asked Mr. Bowling. ‘Find the men I’ve spoke of, and they’ll most like be able to find you twenty more, or put you in the way of finding ’em.’

‘And who is the man you charge?’ asked Coninghame. Mr. Bowling shook his head with an ugly smile.

‘Not yet, governor,’ he said; ‘not yet. It don’t suit me to say at present. The man

mustn't be touched till I'm ready to go away. I shall ask you, governor, to take your solemn oath not to try to touch that man till I say I'm ready.'

Coninghame had no objection to using this tool, but he had the strongest possible objection to the tool himself. The man was coarse in manner, obstinate, insolent, and apparently only half sensible of the social division which existed between the General and himself.

'You need be under no apprehension for yourself,' the General said. 'If you can furnish me with the proofs you speak of your name need not appear, and you need not be recognised in the matter.'

'Never you mind,' said the seaman roughly, 'what I need be under no apprehension. That's my affair, that is, not yourn. I shall want you to take your solemn oath you won't try to touch that man till I say I'm ready.'

'And when will that be?' asked Coninghame, suppressing his own choler and repugnance as he might.

‘ It can’t be later than a week from now, returned Mr. Bowling. ‘ It may be less.’

‘ And in the meantime, will you put the names you speak of into my hands, and permit me to make inquiries as to the truth of your statement ?’

‘ In Plymouth, mind you,’ said Mr. Bowling, insensible to the angry satire of Coningham’s politeness, ‘ yes. But first you’ll take your solemn oath not to move until I give you the word—not to move down here, I mean. You can do what you like in Plymouth, cause none of his old pals but me knows where he is. You’ll take your solemn oath, likewise, not to let out as you ever so much as heard o’ me. And also you’ll take your solemn oath to pay me a hundred pounds down in gold as soon as ever you’ve found the men as I shall give you their names, and found they knew Johnny Smith, and can swear to him.’

‘ How am I to tell that they can swear to him,’ asked Coningham, ‘ until they see him?’

‘ Can you swear to him?’ asked Mr. Bowling.

‘If all they say’s true, you’ve felt his hand’s weight since you’ve come to live down here. I could swear to him. Mind you,’ he cried, striving to correct himself, I name no names.’

‘Come,’ said the General, who was wincing in every nerve against the other’s insolence and brutality, and yet must needs bear with him, ‘you have gone too far to go back. Who is the man?’

‘Not yet,’ said Bowling; not yet, governor. I want your solemn oath.’ He repeated his conditions.

‘You have my promise,’ said Coningham, frozenly.

‘That won’t do for me,’ returned Mr. Bowling. And he stuck to the point with so much persistence that at last Coningham yielded, and much against the grain, and absurdly conscious of the want of dignity involved in the proceeding, swore to observe Mr. Bowling’s conditions.

‘The name,’ said Mr. Bowling, then, ‘is Joby Round, Esquire, of Konak Cottage. Now,

you mind what you've sworn upon your solemn oath.'

A sacred joy illumined Coningham's heart.

' Providence,' he said to himself, ' has given the scoundrel into my hands at last.'

dominate the board. Ye've got a brace o' burly barons there, but the Church has been too wily for them, and their way's blocked everywhere. The queen's dead, poor lady. Never a thought had she but for that useless, heavy-footed lubber of a consort of hers, and she's flang herself into the vera gulf o' deith to secure him victory. Man, if Walter Scott were here, he'd tell ye a tale out o' that would bring the brine to your cheek.'

'Clem,' said Job, turning to where the hunchback sat in an arm-chair, with one white thin hand on each elbow, 'you'll have to look to your laurels. Here's Mr. Armstrong turning poet on our hands.'

'*Turning* poet?' inquired Clem. 'Do you know your own father-in-law no better than that?'

'Hoots, man!' said Armstrong, half pettish, half abashed; 'hauld your tongue!'

'I won't hold my tongue, sir,' cried Clem. 'And if you take that tone with me, Mr. Armstrong, I'll show Job something I happen to have in my pocket now.'

‘As ye like—as ye will,’ said Armstrong, with a half-sheepish, half-humorous look. ‘But not in my presence. When I’m gone I’ll leave my character in your hands, like Sir Peter Teazle. When I was a lad,’ he hurried on, with the manifest object of keeping Clem from speaking, ‘I’d a bit of a turn for rhyming, and found out for myself that love and dove would jingle, and in my auld age, I’ve gone back on the follies of my youth. It’s a harmless sort of craze enough.’

‘What have you got in your pocket, Clem?’ said Job. ‘No, don’t take it out. Did you know that I was gifted with second sight? See if I can read it?’

Friend o’ my youth——

Am I right so far?’

‘Right so far,’ said Clem.

‘You’ll excuse the accent, Mr. Armstrong,’ said Job, with a droll look at the old man. ‘The Ayrshire dialect is not likely to come very trippingly from a Castle Barfield tongue.’

Let me see if I can read a little further.' He closed his eyes, and began to read or to recite deliberately—

Friend o' my youth, my auldest crony,  
My benison be on ye, Johnny,  
Your honest pow was black and bonny  
    When first we met,  
But noo your lyart cockernony  
    Has tint the jet.

'Clem,' said Armstrong, almost severely, 'ye've broken your plighted word.'

'Indeed I haven't,' cried Clem; 'I haven't shown them to a soul.'

'There's no trusting women,' said Job. 'You've shown the verses to your granddaughter, Mr. Armstrong, and she has repeated them to her father till he knows them by heart. That's all the mystery.' Sarah entered the room at this instant. 'Here's the criminal herself,' said Job.

'Come here, ye traitress,' cried Armstrong. 'Come here and apologise.'

'With pleasure,' said Sarah. 'I can apolo-

gise as fluently as any girl in Illyria. 'What have I done?'

'Ye've betrayed my confidence,' said the old man, pinching her ear. 'Ye've been reciting my rhyming havers to your father, and putting your grandfather to shame.'

'Oh, these poets, these poets!' cried the girl merrily. 'What is it you call yourselves in Latin, Clem? It's genus something.'

'Irritable,' said Clem.

'That's it,' said Sarah. 'Until Clem told me better, I used to think it meant irritable geniuses. The applause of the world is the breath of your nostrils, and you call a poor girl who tries to spread your fame a traitress.'

'When do you start for Coventry, lassie?' asked Armstrong, abruptly.

'To-morrow,' Job answered for her. 'And I'm going to keep house alone, like a hermit. You'll not stay beyond the three days, Sarah; I can't spare you longer. Unless, that is, your aunt has any real need of you.'

'She's not to say downright ill,' said Arm-

strong, 'but she's a wee bit feeble, and she has a friend coming to spend awhile with her. So she wrote me to ask if I'd persuade Sarah to go over. She wants to lessen the trouble of having one guest by inviting another.'

'Aunt isn't strong enough to go about much,' said Sarah; 'and her friend wants to see Stratford and Shottery and Charlecote and Lucy, and I am to take her about. It will be a very pleasant time if the weather keeps fine, but March is not the nicest month in the year for country sightseeing.'

'It'll be almost the first time ye were ever apart, Job,' said Armstrong.

'The first,' said Job, in answer. 'She's seen a goodish piece of old England, but she's seen it all with me. She's never slept till now except under the same roof with her father.'

'And now, who knows,' said Sarah, 'what dangers I may leave him exposed to?'

She and Clem both laughed at this harmless jest, but Job sat seriously staring at the fire,

and Armstrong winced a little, though nobody noticed him.

‘Here’s Monday,’ said Job, rousing himself from his reverie. ‘Sarah goes to-morrow, and when I’ve seen her off, I’ve a mind to take a trap from the Barfield Arms, if the day’s fine, and drive out for a change. I don’t like the house without her,’ he said, knitting his bushy eyebrows, but smiling underneath the frown. ‘Will you come, Clem?’

‘Not to-morrow,’ said Clem. ‘I’ll come Wednesday, and bring one of our traps. I’m not much of a Jehu myself, but I’ll get one of the men to drive me here, and he can walk back again. What do you say to Wednesday, Job? Will it suit you?’

‘Very well,’ said Job; ‘say Wednesday. I’ll potter about in the garden to-morrow; there are lots of things to be done there. For one thing, that cucumber-frame’s broken, Sarah, and I must turn glazier.’

‘Well,’ said Clem, ‘Wednesday’s a fixture,

Job. I must be getting home, or I shall be late.'

'I'll walk a bit of the way with you,' Job said, rising also. 'I shall find you here when I come back again, Mr. Armstrong?'

The old man nodded assent, and Clem having said his good bye, he and the giant sallied out together—an odd contrast as they always were. The night was clear and starlit, and, for the time of year, wonderfully mild and balmy.

'Clem,' said Job, when they had walked clear of houses, and got between the hedges of the lane, 'I've known you since you could walk, and I think I can trust you.'

'Well, Job,' said Clem, cheerfully, 'I hope you can ; I think you can.'

'I'm going to tell you something I've more or less suspected for a year or two, and decisively learned to-day. It mustn't be breathed to any single creature, you understand. You mustn't feel offended if I exact your solemn promise to keep this thing a secret.'

‘Anything you choose to tell me in that manner, Job, and under those conditions, shall be sacred to me.’

‘Well, lad,’ said the giant in a tranquil voice, ‘every man carries his death-warrant with him, signed and sealed. The only difference in my case is I know it, and can tell the thing I shall die of in all human chance.’

‘You?’ cried Clem, stopping in the road in his amazement and staring at the form that towered above him.

‘Yes,’ said Job, ‘I’ve got heart disease. That’s my secret. Keep it.’

‘Job!’ cried the hunchback, horror-stricken, ‘you can’t mean it.’

‘It’s true enough, Clem, lad,’ Job answered. ‘Except for that one thing I’m as tough as leather. But the heart’s hung on a thread of flax. My mother died of the same thing. Now, Clem . . . I’ll tell you why I confide this thing in you. I wouldn’t have Sarah know it for the world. She’d break her heart worrying over it, and it’ll be bad enough for her to

know the truth when the end comes.' To all outward seeming he was as tranquil, as composed, and as solid as ever. 'But knowing now that my life may not be my own at any minute, I take this moment, the only one I may have, don't you see, to ask one thing of you. You love the girl, lad.' He laid his hand on Clem's shoulder, and his ponderous voice was deeper than common. 'Be a brother to her, be a friend to her. God knows! she may stand in need of brotherly friendship. I'm troubled, Clem; I'm in deep waters.' Clem could not answer at that moment, and they walked in silence for a time. 'Watch over her, lad, if I should go,' said Job. 'I know you'd do it without a word from me. But you can tell her, if ever need arises, that you had her father's solemn charge. I may live to be eighty, but I may go at any minute. You'll take the charge I offer you?'

'I'll keep it, Job,' said Clem, in a broken voice, 'if I ever have to keep it—which God

forefend. I hope you may live for many a year yet, and see her happy.'

'I may, I may,' Job answered. 'Good-night, lad. Wednesday. Not a word of all this, mind; and not a look. She's as quick as lightning.'

'It's like your friendship,' said Clem, wringing his big hand, 'to have offered this trust to me. I won't be unworthy of it.'

They parted with this speech, and went their separate ways, Clem with tears in his eyes, and Job tranquilly himself on the outside, whatever might be going on within.

'You are soon back, father,' said Sarah, when he re-entered the cottage. 'You didn't go far with Clem? Sit down, and let me fill your pipe for you. I feel as if I were going away for a long, long time, and I must pet you a little before I go.'

'It's a good girl, Job,' said Armstrong smilingly, as Job took his pipe and a lighted spill of paper from his daughter's fingers.

'Ay,' said Job, 'it's a good girl.'

‘Gentlemen,’ said the good girl merrily, ‘I am obliged to you. But may I ask why you pass this novel discovery from one to another so very, very gravely? Shall I go and leave you to discuss my merits in peace?’ She made a pretence of leaving the room, but when she had reached the door she turned, and running swiftly to her father’s chair seized him from behind, and putting both her arms about his head hugged it to her breast. Then with sudden demureness she seated herself between her father and Armstrong, and stretched out a hand to each. ‘You are a dear old grandfather,’ she said to Armstrong; ‘and you,’ turning to Job, ‘are the dearest father in the world. And now that we are all contented with each other, what shall we talk about?’

They talked of many things, she brightly and with gaiety, though touching now and then a softer note, and Job with an almost tender seriousness. At length Armstrong rose to go.

‘Well, Job, lad,’ he asked, ‘when shall we three meet again?’

‘When the hurly-burly’s done,’ said Sarah, inconsequently enough, but Armstrong answered her seriously.

‘Ay, lass! When the hurly-burly’s done there’ll be no more partings.’

Somehow, and no one of the three could have told why, a cold sense of solemnity fell upon them all.

‘Why should I have said that?’ asked Sarah. ‘There was no meaning in it. And you capped it with such a sudden seriousness you turned me cold.’

‘I’m an auld man, my dear,’ said her grandfather, ‘and if ye live to be auld yourself, ye’ll find that any sort of nonsense talked at hazard will take grave meanings in your mind at whiles. The world’s full o’ gravities to auld people. Good-bye, lass; be good and happy. Good-night, Job.’ He went away gravely, and when he had reached the street he stood still for a moment to think, as if there were something he must needs recall. ‘What brings this sort o’ groping after shadows in my mind?’ he

asked himself half aloud. 'William Armstrong, ye're getting auld, and doddering in your wits.'

He walked on slowly and thoughtfully, and pausing mechanically at his own side-door, fumbled in his pocket for the key.

'There's too much dash and deevil in his play,' said he. 'With greater caution he'd be formidable.'

There were no more cares, visionary or real, for him that night, for he was fairly back on his own enchanted ground again.

Job and Sarah sat up later than usual and talked of the girl's approaching journey. The coach passed the door of Konak Cottage, and was timed to catch the London train. Sarah had written a note to Aaron telling him of her intended journey, and in the pauses of their talk she wondered whether he would come to see her off by the coach, or whether he would be at the Birmingham station to see her off by train, or whether he would even be able to accompany her as far as Coventry. She

took this pleasing uncertainty to bed with her, and thought over all the chances of it until she fell asleep. But before she and her father parted for the night he made another relapse into that earliest dialect of his youth which had once before surprised her. When she came somewhat absently to give him her usual good-night kiss, he put a hand on each soft cheek and looked at her with an infinite mournful tenderness.

‘Thee knowst I love thee, lass?’ he said.

She kissed him vehemently and nestled to him. Oh, yes, yes, yes, she said, she knew it well.

She was only going away for three days, and yet there was a little sadness in the thought of parting. But when morning came all that had vanished. True to time they heard the horn of the coach tootling cheerily, and Job, shouldering the girl’s substantial trunk as lightly as if it had been a feather, walked up the garden-path and waited at the side of the horseroad. The coach drew up, and the

driver, stooping from his seat to take the trunk so lightly poised in Job's hands, felt himself nearly pulled from his perch by its unexpected weight.

'I thowt the cussid thing was empty,' said the driver. 'Theest got a bit o' muscle for a little 'un, gaffer.'

Sarah entered the coach; the door was slammed, the guard leapt nimbly to his place, and a minute later Job was looking after a cloud of March dust of the coach's raising. He went back and began to work at those garden affairs he had spoken of the night before. Once or twice a neighbour passed the gate, and leaning his arms upon it paused to say what wonderful weather it was for the time of the year, and each having quoted the proverb that a peck of March dust is worth a king's ransom, went away again. Nobody saw any change in Job Round, who presented the picture of strength, massiveness, and tranquillity with which Castle Barfield had so long been familiar, and not a hair's-breadth more or

less so far as any man who looked on him could tell. The big grey eyes had their old look of wilful strength, the bushy, red-brown eyebrows knitted over them with as resolved a tranquil determination as ever, and even through the silky masses of the great red beard the dogged formation of the chin showed as decisively as it had always done since Job had arrived at man's estate. And yet there was such a change within the man as it is difficult to tell. The old tempestuous gloom was there no more, to be riven by the old wild lightnings of the soul. There were no more horrors to be fought.

Whether he would or no, his thoughts went back to his earliest boyhood, and he found himself recalling companions who had long been dead or forgotten. He remembered boyish affections, little touches of shamefaced sentiment which had never found expression, tenderesses of friendship which surprised him. He could translate the coarse daub of a portrait of his mother which had always hung in his

father's sitting-room into something which he thought must have been like her forgotten face. It translated itself rather. He caught himself wandering in the summer fields with his young wife, and the fictitious peace of those days grew real with him. Sarah went toddling about the garden with uncertain footsteps, and he feigned to be outrun by her and allowed himself to be caught. He could hear her shrill laugh of infantine delight.

With all this was a great sadness, and a strange sense of dreamy unreality in present things. He worked in this mood all morning, and when his accustomed dinner hour drew near, he walked into the house, washed, arranged the table for himself, and sat down to dine. Sarah's vacant place seemed to stare at him, and though he was usually but little to be impressed by solitude, he felt it so keenly now that some companionship seemed necessary to him, if it were only that of a book. He cast his eye about the room, and, seeing the family Bible within reach, stretched out his hand for

it and laid it open on the table. As he ate, he read here and there a passage. 'Therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day.'

'Now,' said Job, 'there's a gusto in that.' He turned the leaves backward: 'As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not,' he read, 'so he that getteth riches and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days and be a fool.' He read the words over again. 'It's a picture of what ought to be,' he said to himself. He turned the leaves back still further. 'There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.' He closed the book and pushed it away from him thoughtfully. 'Wisdom there, any way. Thou'rt saved from that burthen of my getting, lass. It was better gone. I've been at rest since it was gone. I've been at rest for thy sake. Wisdom. Wisdom,' he murmured. 'It prospered with none of us. Bonaventure left his share in the midst of

his days, and was a fool for all his cunning. Mr. Thomas Bowling, 'serious as he was, a slow smile curled his features as he muttered the name, 'prospered less than any. Fools, fools, all of us.'

He went back into the garden and worked there all the afternoon, and his softened mood never left him for that day. The stormy times of his life refused to be recalled.

Evening came on chill and lowering, after the almost 'summer-like brightness of the day. He relit his fire, made his own tea, trifled over it for half-an-hour; then cleared away, and having made all snug by drawing the blinds and lighting the lamp, he sat down with his pipe and a volume of Shakespeare. The wind began to howl somewhat wildly, and one or two great drops fell down the chimney and hissed and spattered in the fire.

'It will be rain to-night,' said Job, looking up from the pages of Macbeth. 'Let it come down.' The latch of the garden gate clicked, and he heard a footstep on the gravel. 'Who's

this likely to be?' he asked himself. A rap sounded at the door. 'Come in. Oh, you, is it, Whittaker? It's getting to be a wildish night outside, isn't it?'

'Yes,' said Aaron; 'it's a wildish night, Mr. Round. It's been a fine day, too.' From one cause or another Aaron was pale and out of breath. 'Is Miss Round at home, sir?'

'She went to Coventry this morning,' said Job, scarcely looking at him. 'She wrote to tell you she was going.'

'This morning?' cried Aaron with a surprise which was not very well acted. 'How strange for her to have made such a mistake. She said Wednesday in her note.'

'Hum!' said Job, turning to look at him; 'have you got the note about you?'

'No, sir,' replied Aaron, feeling in his pocket. 'I'm afraid I left it at home.'

'I think you'll find that it's you who've made the mistake, and not Sarah. She read the note to me before she sent it. Look at it again when you get home.'

‘I will,’ said Aaron; ‘I’m sorry to have missed her.’

‘Do you hear that?’ said Job, as the rain swept against the windows and the wind rumbled in the chimney. ‘You’d best sit down and wait until the storm’s over. How is the mine getting on?’

‘Admirably, sir,’ cried Aaron. ‘It’s what I always thought it would be—the real old-fashioned Staffordshire ten-yard coal.’

‘That’s all right,’ said Job. ‘Sit down, man, and make yourself at ease.’

Aaron sat down and rested an elbow on the round table upon which the lamp was placed. Instantly the ground glass lampshade began to clatter against the chimney it surrounded, and Job, looking up, noticed for the first time Aaron’s unusual pallor.

‘Hillo!’ he said, ‘there’s an odd look about you to-night. You’re shaking like a leaf too. What’s the matter? Here, let me feel your pulse. I’ve done a little bit of doctoring in my time.’ He took Aaron’s wrist and held it for a little

time. 'I don't want to frighten you, Whittaker,' he said then, 'but if you're a sensible man, you won't go to bed without having seen a doctor. Let me look at your tongue. That's clean enough. You see 'a doctor to-night. It strikes me you're sickening for a fever.'

'Do you think so?' said Aaron, who had his own reasons for the emotion which so visibly agitated him.

'I'm pretty sure of it,' returned Job. He had no great affection for young Mr. Whittaker even now, when the young gentleman for the greater part of a year had been walking with the utmost correctness and circumspection. But Sarah's welfare and happiness seemed bound up in him, and this fact aroused in Job an interest for Aaron which he would otherwise have been very far from feeling. 'Have you caught cold in any way?' he asked.

'I did catch a chill coming out of the mine the other day,' returned Aaron. 'I felt it the minute I touched the surface.' He thought

within himself how lucky a thing it was that his agitation should be thus explained.

‘You’d better take a glass of grog,’ said Job. ‘That can do you no harm, anyway.’ He rose and walked to a cupboard which cut off one corner of the room, and drew from it a bottle of whisky, a sugar-bowl, spoons and glasses. Aaron’s heart was beating like a sledge-hammer, and a fear crept over him that things were going too easily. Circumstances might have a trap for him. Who could have fancied that his own want of courage could have played into his hands in this way?

Job set the kettle on the fire, and taking up his book, again went on reading. By-and-by the kettle began to sing, and he laid down his Shakespeare and arose to mix the glass of grog he had recommended.

‘By the way,’ said Aaron, ‘that reminds me, Mr. Round. I’ve a sample bottle of Scotch whisky here I—I should like you to taste. I’m told it’s remarkably good, and I’ve had an offer of six gallons very cheap. This was drawn—

from the cask this afternoon.' He fumbled at the pocket of his overcoat as he said this, and his face was hidden from Job's observation. When he had done speaking he produced a flat flask containing about half-a-pint.

'All right,' said Job; 'try mine.' He had mixed a glass already. 'I'll try yours.'

It was all terribly easy, Aaron thought. Horribly easy. There was no need even for the little juggling trick he and Mr. Bowling had arranged together—a simple manœuvre by which he was to have replaced that first bottle by another of the same size, containing a somewhat smaller quantity of liquor, so that it might look as if some had been poured out of it, and therefore match the one from which Job had drunk already.

'This is extremely good,' said Aaron, after taking a liberal sip at the glass Job had set before him. His voice shook still, and his heart beat so that he wondered if Job heard it. Job mixed for himself from Aaron's bottle, and then resumed his seat.

‘So you think,’ he said, ‘that you’re going to make a good thing of the mine, Whittaker?’

‘Yes,’ replied Aaron, shakily; ‘a magnificent thing. I always felt sure that coal was there. I wish now we’d bought up land all round before we proved the estate. It’ll go ever so much dearer now. You’ll see mines over all that end of the parish in a year or two.’ Would he never drink? How much longer would there be to wait? Would he detect a flavour in the grog and guess on a sudden the reason of Aaron’s tremor? He said he had been a bit of a doctor in his time. How long would it take him to go to sleep? Was there enough to make him go to sleep? The coward and scoundrel shook from head to foot, and a cold sweat broke out all over him, though the palms of his hands were as hot as fire.

Job was musing and seemed in no haste to drink, but after a time he stretched out his hand sideways, took up his glass and sipped.

‘It isn’t bad whisky,’ he said then, ‘but

I've made it a thought too sweet.' He added a little more of Aaron's whisky to the mixture and tasted it again. 'Not bad at all,' he said. 'What do they want for it?'

'They want ninety shillings for six gallons,' returned Aaron, who had been too cautious not to prepare his facts beforehand.

'Cheap enough,' said Job. 'Fifteen shillings a gallon. But isn't there a queerish sort of after-taste? A slightly bitter flavour? Eh?' Aaron clutched his glass as Job looked round at him and drank, looking down into the glass as he did so, to hide the guilt and fear he felt in his own eyes.

'No,' he managed to say, a moment later, 'I don't think so. I tasted it myself and noticed nothing of the sort.'

'Mouth's a little out of order perhaps,' said Job. He sipped a third time.

The task the scoundrel had set himself was beyond his powers. It was horrible, horrible, to sit there and wait and fear. He emptied

his own glass at a gulp, and rose to his feet with a stagger.

‘I think,’ he said, with a prodigious effort, ‘I’ll go and see a doctor now, Mr. Round. I’ll come back and tell you what he says. I’ve a—a pain in the head.’

‘Gad,’ said Job to himself, ‘I’ve frightened the fellow. There’s more funk than fever in his face, and I’ve seen enough of both to be able to tell one from the other.’ He contented himself with a single nod and a ‘very well,’ and taking up his Shakespeare, settled himself anew before the fire.

## CHAPTER V.

THE keen March wind and stinging rain did something for Aaron, but his absence from Job Round did more. Yet when he had passed through the gate a hand laid suddenly upon his arm in the darkness sent his heart to his mouth, and he began to shake afresh.

‘Is it done a’ready?’ asked the voice of Mr. Bowling. ‘Got the medal?’

‘No,’ said Aaron, in a trembling whisper. ‘He’s—he’s got the grog. I—I left him drinking it.’

‘Left him a drinking it?’ demanded Mr. Bowling. ‘Why didn’t you stop and see him drink it? Wheer’s the bottle?’

‘On the table,’ returned Aaron faintly. ‘I’m going back again. I couldn’t stand it; I couldn’t stand it any longer.’

‘Hold up,’ said Mr. Bowling, with a terrible anathema; ‘I never seen such a shaking coward. And I never seen a coward that wasn’t a sneak, neither. Don’t you try to sneak with me. Remember, I don’t give the word to General Coningham afore I’ve got that medal in my hands. If I don’t give him the word, Joby Round’s a free man still. Try to slip me this night, and if there was need for it I’d set him at you.’

‘I shan’t try to slip you,’ replied Aaron. ‘Where would be the use?’

‘Not much,’ said Mr. Bowling; ‘I could be out there as soon as you, and it would go hard if me as speaks the language couldn’t get news of you as don’t. Why, I’d rouse the land again you, and split the gold among the villagers for twenty mile around, sooner than I’d be done.’

‘You can trust to me,’ said Aaron; ‘I shan’t try to slip you. Where would be the use?’

‘How long are you going to give him?’

demanded Mr. Bowling. 'When are you going back again? Suppose somebody calls while we're a standing here!' He broke into whispered oaths and execrations, and went stamping about the roadway in a sudden paroxysm of rage. 'Go back again,' he said hoarsely, laying both hands on Aaron's collar; 'go back, ye shivering lubber.'

'I can't go yet,' panted Aaron; 'he'd guess there was something the matter if I did. I told him I was going to see a doctor.'

'See a doctor!' groaned Mr. Bowling, exasperated almost beyond endurance. 'See a wet nurse!—see a idiot asylum! Cuss *me*,' said Mr. Bowling, letting his hands fall from Aaron's collar with a sudden desperate resignation, 'if I ever *did* see a shiverin', shakin', sneakin', whinin', limpin', crawlin' pup to come within a hundred mile of him.'

Castle Barfield High Street was deserted. Standing in front of Job's house the two could dimly see the lights of the shops which began a hundred yards away. The jets of the gas

leaped and quivered in the street lamps, and the rain-flogged street seemed to crawl in the wind where the gas-light fell upon it. Aaron and his companion cowered in the shelter of the hedge. The clock of the near church struck the half-hour.

‘When are you a going in again?’ demanded Mr. Bowling.

‘Not yet,’ said Aaron; ‘not till he’s asleep.’

‘And when d’ye think he’ll be asleep, ye—ye—ye mutton-hearted, donkey-headed——’ There was nothing in Mr. Bowling’s vocabulary to equal his conception.

‘I shall wait here for half-an-hour,’ answered Aaron. Mr. Bowling groaned in a new access of rage, and once more went stamping in a circle, taxing memory and invention for expressions equal to the cause.

Meanwhile Job sat within, sipping and smoking tranquilly. Underlying his strange contentment was a wonder at it which was disposed to be both tremulous and tender.

His thoughts turned to his daughter, and he blessed her in his heart—not effusively or with any tempestuous movement of affection, but as a common father might, who loved his child and had an ordinary history behind him.

His glass was empty. The rain and the wind were without. Within was peace; deep peace. The noises of the wind and rain fell to a murmur on his heedless ear, and then in some strange fashion seemed to swell to a roll of organ music, and to die slowly, far away. Then it was summer weather, and he was standing in the fields. His dead wife and his living child were together with him, and both were in the springtide of their beauty, as never child and mother were, outside the land of dreams. Then the dream slipped and faded into the great hollow of unconscious sleep; and he sat with his chin upon his breast and his arms hanging lax by his side.

The clock of the near church struck the hour, and the rain and the wind were still. The latch of the garden gate clicked, and a

step sounded on the gravel. Aaron's hair, as he approached the cottage door, was stirring at the roots as if it meant to stand upright by-and-by; his heart seemed to batter at his ribs; his legs failed at the knees. He held on by the trellis work about the door, and tried to listen, but there was such a roaring in his ears that he could make out nothing. At last he summoned a desperate courage and knocked. He could not tell if there were any reply, but he knocked again more loudly. The garden gate clicked again, and Mr. Bowling sped on tiptoe along the gravelled footway.

‘Do you want to rouse the neighbourwood?’ he demanded, seizing Aaron by the arm. ‘If he can’t hear that, he can’t hear anything. Try the door.’ Mr. Bowling’s own whispering voice was husky, and his heart beat violently as well as Aaron’s, but he was beyond comparison the bolder of the two. Aaron tried the door, but in such a bungling way that the seaman (who found his own fears and suspense so unbearable that he would rather have faced Job Round

than endure them any longer) pushed him on one side, turned the handle, and peered into the room. 'All right,' he said in a grating whisper, and opening the door a little wider, stole in with Aaron at his heels. Mr. Bowling softly closed the door, and the two conspirators stood staring at each other, haggard-eyed and pale. The same thought was in the mind of each, and at the selfsame instant sent the eyes of both to the sleeping man. What if he had detected the trick, and knew its purpose, and his present silence were but a ruse to lure them on? What if the mighty figure rose, and the masterly eyes they had both dreaded should open on them? Mr. Bowling crept behind the table and laid his hand on a formidable carving-knife that happened to be lying there.

'Jog his elber,' he said to Aaron in a croaking voice. Aaron ventured nearer, and extended a timid hand.

'Put that knife down,' he whispered to Mr. Bowling. 'If he wakes I can tell him I'm not

well, and you're going to see me up to the hotel. He thought I wasn't well before.'

'Jog his elber,' repeated the seaman, and Aaron extended a hand so shaking and indeterminate that Mr. Bowling's greed and his horror of his own fears so stirred him that he came roughly round the table to the front of the unconscious figure in the armchair, and kneeling before it, knife in hand, began to fumble at the buttons of the waistcoat to release the watch-chain. At that instant a boy running home along the High Street, drew a hoop-stick across the bars of the garden gate with a clatter so surprising, so sudden, and so threatening that the two rascals jumped, and Mr. Bowling, rising suddenly to his feet, fell backwards. He stretched out a hand to save himself, and thrust it into the smouldering coals, whereat a roar escaped him, and in his natural hurry to withdraw his hand he caught hold of the nearest object, which happened to be the kettle. Down came the kettle with a crash into the fireplace, the fire-irons followed it—

the very voice of doom would have been no more dreadful than these noises were at the moment to the men who heard them ; and then everything went silent. The sleeping figure never moved.

Mr. Bowling began to curse and moan over his damaged hand, and to brush from it with great gingerliness the blackened ashes which still clung to it. Suddenly, with an impatient oath, he seized with the uninjured hand the medal which hung at Job Round's watch-chain, and tugged at it with no other result than to drag the watch violently from the pocket.

'Unfasten that there watch-chain,' he said savagely, and Aaron with shaking fingers obeyed him. Bowling snatched the watch from his hand and thrust it into his own trouser pocket with its attached chain and medal. 'And now come on,' he said. Aaron moved towards the door. 'Wait a bit,' said Mr. Bowling, and to Aaron's horror he stepped back and took Job Round by the beard. 'Ah, Joby !' he said in a jeering voice, 'you've took me by it afore

to-day, haven't you? You've had many a gird at me, Joby. You'd sooner see it rot theer an' rust to powder, would you, than me have one piastre of it? More'n four-and-twenty year you've kept me hungry and thirsty and poor and hard labourin', have you! damn you! And now I've got it! got it! got it!

'Eh!' said Aaron, seizing him by the shoulder and dragging at him with both hands; 'listen!'

They listened, and except for the loud murmur in their own ears there was a death-like silence.

'Come away,' cried Aaron, in a horror and agony of fear; 'come away. Every second's dangerous here.'

Mr. Bowling, shaking his damaged fist at Job and snarling at him with an inarticulate jeer, suffered himself to be drawn into the garden.

'Got a handkicher?' he asked there. 'Let's have something to wrap up this here hand o' mine. That's a odd thing,' continued Mr.

Bowling, as he wrapped up his wounded member. 'Ears and 'ears ago, he says to me, Job Round does, "If ever you meddles with me," he says, "you'll burn your fingers, William." And so I have.'

'I—I thought,' said Aaron, trying to be at least as much at ease as his companion, 'I thought you said your name was Thomas.'

'So it is,' said Mr. Bowling, groaning at his wounds.

'Then why did he call you William?' demanded Aaron.

'Why,' said Mr. Bowling sardonically, 'it was a pet name he had for me. You'll find out the use of having two names afore you're much older. Here, let's get out of this. A pleeceman passed twice while I was a standing outside there, and I don't want to be seen again.'

'Don't let us go through the High Street,' urged Aaron, at the gate.

'Why not?' asked the other.

'We might be seen together.'

Mr. Bowling jeered at the speaker. 'Take which road you like,' he answered. 'I'm a going through the High Street, and I'm a going straight to General Coningham's. When Joby Round wakes up he'll be for following me, but I fancy they won't let him.'

Aaron felt certain that everybody who set eyes on him would know what he had done and whither he was going. Of course he knew very well that this fear was absurd, and yet the profoundest scorn of it which he could summon entirely failed to shake it. Mr. Bowling, who had discarded his smockfrock, and was habited in a complete suit of heavy corduroys, rolled along before him, and Aaron followed, afraid to lose sight of him for a moment. He had sworn to keep faith with Mr. Bowling, and Mr. Bowling had sworn to keep faith with him. He thought he could guess, from his own sentiments with regard to the oath, the nature of Mr. Bowling's. He was fully persuaded that his companion would cut and run at the earliest opportunity, and he was fully determined to

forestall any such intentions. As he marched in Mr. Bowling's rear, trembling lest any lonely figure in the ill-lit street should turn out to be a constable who in some supernatural manner should know all about him, and be gifted with extraordinary powers for his arrest and detention, his mind was still free enough to play about the possibilities of circumventing his partner. To have drugged and robbed one man within an hour was surely the most natural way in the world for making ready to drug and rob another. Aaron knew Job Round's story now, and knew that Mr. Bowling expected to receive a hundred pounds for betraying him to his enemy. Without that hundred pounds Mr. Bowling would be unable to move, and with it Aaron might be able to move a little quicker. Extra money would mean extra rapidity of locomotion, and why, the young man asked himself, with a flush of something like surprised indignation, why should he give twenty-five thousand pounds away to Mr. Bowling? The idea was absurd—prodigious.

Aaron scouted it, as he would have scouted a serious attempt to demonstrate that two and one make nine. He felt it like an insult to his own intelligence, and he never doubted for a second that Mr. Bowling was as fully animated as himself by the reflection that the whole is greater than a part.

They got through the High Street without exciting any man's notice, and Aaron followed the seaman's lead into the lane which led to the Warren, and then, knowing observation to be much less likely there, he hastened to overtake him.

'You don't think he's likely to keep you waiting for the money, do you?' he asked.

'No,' said Mr. Bowling, in a guarded growl, 'I made him give his solemn oath he'd pay it down when I give him leave to move. I see him last night, and he'd got his evidence all right. He's got two witnesses within six mile at this minute. They'll be at the barracks to-morrow morning to be set in front of Joby Round, Esquire. They'll rub the Squire off of

him when they get him there, and rub some new marks into that big back of his'n to keep the others company. I see the others one day, when we was a bathing, nigh on five-and-twenty 'ear ago.'

Aaron fell back a step, and turned a little sick. He did not hate Job Round; he had never hated anybody—much. He thought Mr. Bowling's rejoicing a very unpleasant thing to witness. He was sorry for Job Round, and was very much relieved to have had nothing to do with his betrayal.

'Here's the gate,' said Mr. Bowling, after a silent tramp of four or five minutes. 'You wait about here, so as not to be noticed particular if anybody passes. I'll be out in five minutes.'

'I say,' returned Aaron, catching him by his corduroy sleeve, 'you'd better let me keep the watch!'

'Had I?' said Mr. Bowling. 'What for?'

'I thought,' said Aaron, stammering somewhat, 'you might like to show you trusted me.'

‘No,’ said Mr. Bowling, calmly, ‘I’m in no particular hurry to show you that. When we come to pen and ink and paper, you shall write for yourself whatever there is on this here medal, and then we shall both know all about it. But yet awhile, with your leave and my respects, I’ll keep it where it is, young governor.’ He laid a hand on Aaron’s breast, and thrusting his bearded face forward, continued in another tone: ‘Mind this. No man as plays unfaithful to a pal ’ll ever lay a hand on that there treasure. I’ve sworn to you; you’ve sworn to me. Wherefore let us be contented, and likewise trustful and playfaring. Mind you, that’s a certainty. It’s only playfaring and having faith in one another as’ll ever lay a finger on that there gold. I know it. If it had ha’ been played fair with it might ha’ been spent afore now. Wait there.’

He pushed the gate with his shoulder, and as it yielded and he went backwards with it, nursing his burnt hand, Aaron dimly made out that he nodded once or twice, as if in con-

firmation of his words. When he had gone rolling up the avenue, crunching the gravel beneath his heavy boots, Aaron slipped within the gate and followed, treading on the grass, and bringing down cold showers of rain from the laurel bushes which bordered the drive. A dog rattled a chain and barked in a deep hoarse voice at no great distance, and Aaron stood still to listen to Bowling's footsteps. In a very little while they paused, and he heard a bell ringing, and then the opening of a door, which made a path for a broad line of light to fall upon the wet grass, and the bare trees, and a chill fog that hung amidst their branches. This line of light disappeared as suddenly as it came, the dog's bark died into a growl, and the chain trailed with a hollow sound as the brute re-entered his kennel.

Then time began to drag dolefully, and all the unwelcome mental guests whom Aaron would fain have held at arm's length for ever began to pay him visits. Sarah in tears, in scorn, in hate. His partners in amazement, in

wrath, in pursuit of him. Job Round asleep. Job Round awaking. Seized, tried, flogged, imprisoned. Worse than all, escaped a second time, and making his way to those wild hills to encounter Aaron there.

What if there were still a chance to undo it all? What if he might run back to Konak Cottage, feign to discover Job Round's state, summon a doctor, administer stimulants, tell him of the dangers that menaced him, and escape, thereby, the consequences of the dishonest dealings at the mine? This was all visionary, and no better than mere madness. He knew it, but whilst he thought these things he lived them, and his imagination was dowered for the time with an incredible activity and brilliance and minuteness. If he had ever expected to suffer like this, he would have gone straight. If he had never gone in league with Mr. Bowling he would have had the whole of that fifty thousand pounds, without even the trouble of fetching it, in all likelihood. Even if he had had to fetch it he would have had it

all without manœuvring, trouble, or dispute. What a mistake it had been to go wrong! What an ass he had been, to be sure, about that mine! Why not have told the truth about it? It was so hard, he answered, to tell the truth after having bounced and lied as he had done. Then why have bounced and lied?

Who could have guessed that just a little harmless brag could have brought a fellow to this? Castle Barfield would have something to talk and think about for a day or two in his flight and Job's arrest. If he had guessed that any such danger had overhung Sarah's father—well, it was of no use to think of these things. He had been fairly cornered and couldn't help himself, and if people didn't want to be found out, and caught and punished, they shouldn't commit ——. An extremely unpleasant reflection.

'Is that fellow going to be all night there?'

No, the fellow was coming at that moment. The door opened, and the wide line of light

broke a second time upon the darkness, and showed the wet grey-green turf, and the bare branches with the fog amongst them. Aaron ran on tiptoe to the gate, and waiting there heard Mr. Bowling's returning footsteps crunching on the gravel. By-and-by he made out Mr. Bowling himself, and whispered at him—

‘Got the money?’

‘Yes,’ Mr. Bowling whispered back again. ‘Come along. You’re game for a five-mile walk, ain’t you? We’ll be in London afore mornin’.’ They tramped for awhile side by side along the darkened lane in silence, and then Mr. Bowling, in a harsh and untuneful voice, began to sing.

‘Hush!’ said Aaron, ‘hush! Somebody may hear you.’

‘What’s that matter?’ cried the other noisily. Then lowering his voice, ‘Ain’t we safe now, you lubber? If it worn’t for this here burned hand o’ mine I’d be as happy as a king.’

'Thus John the Gener-al despatches:

In vain his name he doffed!

His body's goin' to be under hatches,

And Tom is goin' aloft.'

. . . . .

In the quiet room in Konak Cottage the fire burned out and the figure in the chair sat still. The lamp burned on until six o'clock in the morning, and then went out in smoke and evil odours. The figure in the chair sat still. The dawn broke mild and beautiful after the rain, and the birds began to chirrup in the garden. The light grew broader and broader, until the room was full of it. The voices of children on their way to school, the sounds of leisurely traffic, nodding bells of grave horses, rolling wheels of heavy carts, and the drawling cries of the drivers, sounded from without. The world's business had begun again, but the figure in the chair sat still, before the dead cold ashes of the fire.

Clem Bache, driving along Castle Barfield High Street, noticed an unusual spectacle a hundred yards ahead. Half a dozen scarlet-

clad soldiers marched two abreast, and a seventh kept pace a little apart to the rear. Just as he sighted them they paused—in front of Konak Cottage. It struck him with a great surprise when they all entered at the gate.

‘Get along,’ he said to the man who drove with him; ‘let me see what this means.’ He alighted at the gate, and saw that two of the men stood outside the cottage door, stiff and upright, as if on guard.

‘Can’t come in. At present!’ said one, and set a cavalry carbine across the doorway. It touched each side of the trellis work of the porch.

‘Can’t go in?’ said Clem, with a vague terror at his heart. ‘Why not?’

Before the man could answer, another appeared at the door.

‘Slipped this time for good and all,’ he said. ‘Bevan, you start off and find the nearest doctor. Then send the first police officer you find this way.’

‘What is it?’ cried Clem, the vague terror mounting higher and higher.

‘Are you a friend of the party as lived here?’ asked the third man, who wore three gold-laced V-shaped stripes upon his arm. ‘There’s no objection to your coming in, so far as I know.’

Clem entered, and saw still seated in the chair before the dusty grate the King of Terrors.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE two scoundrels tramped into Birmingham together, Mr. Bowling in the highest possible spirits, and Aaron seeing in each bush an officer. Mr. Bowling's hand caused him much uneasiness, but nothing could dash just then the sense of triumph and revenge which filled him, and fed his heart with very manna.

'I ain't a going to be like sneakin' Joby,' he said to Aaron. 'I ain't a going to live rooted in the mud like a cabbage. I'm a going to wander wheer I will, I am. I shall go fust-class everywhere. I shall have black togs and a tall hat, like a cap'n when he goes ashore. I shall chew the best tobacco, and drink the best o' liquor, wines an' sperits both.' He cut an ungainly caper at the fancy, and then groaned over his burned and stinging hand.

‘I say,’ he went on a minute later, speaking in a subdued tone, and edging near to Aaron, ‘you’ll have to take a name, you know. Mind you, I ain’t Thomas Bowling now, nor yet William Dean. You think of a name and I’ll think of a name. I’ll have a good ’un while I’m at it. Sheppard’s a good ’un, ain’t it!—Jack Sheppard. Might be called Johnny, familiar like, for short. Turpin’s a good ’un, too; Richard Turpin. Mix ’em, and it comes to Dicky Sheppard. That’ll do for me—Mr. Richard Sheppard. What’s yours?’

Aaron saw as clearly as Mr. Bowling the necessity for the assumption of an alias, but it hurt his sense of dignity to choose a name at Mr. Bowling’s bidding. He began to see that until this adventure was over he had linked himself to an extremely vulgar person, with whom it was highly disagreeable to be bound in any enterprise. This reflection strengthened his resolve to be rid of Mr. Bowling at the earliest opportunity. He felt that he could not descend to the level of Mr. Bowling’s aspect or

address, and he had a rather exaggerated idea of his own gentility, so that the inevitable contrast between himself and his travelling companion looked greater than it was.

‘I think,’ he said, ‘that until we get to London it would be better if we didn’t seem to know each other. We could travel up by the same carriage,’ he added rather hastily, ‘but it might look accidental.’

‘You trust me, matey,’ returned Mr. Bowling, who saw his drift. ‘Fair play’s my motter. It’s took me a quarter of a centry to learn the A B C of this here business, but I’ve learned it now. That money’s left for nobody as don’t play fair. Beside which, I’ve took my solemn oath—so have you. Afore I go to bed to-night I’m going to learn that there medal off by heart. You learn it off by heart likewise. Soak it into your head and nobody can’t steal it ; soak it into your head, and you can’t get your pocket picked of it, nor drop it overboard, nor yet run away and leave it in a house afire, if such a thing should happen. Soak it in, and there

you are for ever. I might ha' soaked it in a quarter of a century back, and ha' lived like a fightin' cock from then till now.'

This threatened process of soaking-in the precious knowledge the medal had to offer was unpleasant to Aaron's fancy, and if carried into effect would be likely to upset his plans. He walked on pondering, but every personage they encountered on the way, every vehicle that passed them, set his fancies flying, and his thoughts were so disjointed by his fears that they were useless to him.

'Been a thinking of a name?' inquired Mr. Bowling. 'Ain't you? You're a slow sailer, you are. Here, you're a going to seek your fortune, ain't you? Well, Dick Whittington, he went to seek his fortune—Whittington. It ain't that much unlike your own name, neither. You'd answer to it easy. Then his name was Dick. That won't act; no—that cock *won't* fight. My name's Dick. We can't have two of 'em. We ain't so poverty-struck as that comes to. Who else was there as went to seek

his fortune? Why, I'm a going to seek my fortune, too, and I'll make you a present of my baptised name, Robert. There you are, fitted complete, Robert Whittington.'

'All right,' said Aaron sulkily. 'Call me what you please, but you'd better not be too familiar. I don't want to be looked at any more than I can help.'

'Oh, that's all right,' returned Mr. Bowling, who was not in the least degree disturbed or offended. 'That stands to reason. You'll be Young Governor, as respectful as you please, till I've got my new togs on. I shall set up the new togs to-morrow. There used to be a cove in the Ratcliff Highway as went by the name of Aaron, and did the thing slap-up. Black togs,' said Mr. Bowling, half in soliloquy, 'a tall hat, a yellor hankicher wore loose, and there you are, ready to be took for a bishop or a lord.'

In view of this picture he sank into a charmed silence, and rolled with a more imposingly nautical gait than ever. It was evident, even to Aaron's comprehension, that he

was already attired in the new togs in fancy. By fancy's aid, Mr. Bowling was indeed at that moment rolling down the Ratchiff Highway, and was the cynosure of eyes there. His imagination soared so high that a resplendent Jewess winked at him, but he passed on serene.

'There's Joby Round a sleeping in his arm-cheer,' he said by-and-by. 'I wonder what he's a dreaming of. I've got you, this time, Joby, by the Lord! Rather see it rot and rust to powder, would you, Joby? So you would; I know you would; it stands to nature as you would.' He broke into a shout of laughter and waved both hands aloft. Then he began to sing—

'He's got the dibs, has Thomas Bowling,  
The darling of our crew;  
But Joby hears the tempest howling,  
For Time has broached him to.'

'Hold your noise!' cried Aaron. 'Do you want the whole world to hear you?'

'What's it matter if the whole world was to hear me?' retorted Mr. Bowling. 'Do you think I ain't a going to do my heart good now

I've got the chance? If you don't like it, walk on the other side o' the road, and look as if you didn't belong to me. I'm in for a sing-song.

'His form.was of the manliest beauty,  
His nature was not sawft;  
He overturned—as was his duty—  
His foe, and went alawft.'

'You've been drinking,' said Aaron; 'you'll get us both into trouble if you don't take care.'

'Drinking!' cried Mr. Bowling riotously, 'I should think I have been a drinking. Theer's no amount o' drink 'ud do me harm to-night, not if I swum in the strongest sperits as was ever brewed.' Aaron groaned aloud, and Mr. Bowling suddenly modulated his tone. 'Mind you, I can be as stiddy as a rock. I'm as sober now as a parson in his pulpit or a judge upon his bench. It's a poor heart as never rejoices. I'm forty 'ears younger than I was yesterday. There's only one thing as disappints me. I'd lay down half the money to see the cat-o'-nine-tails a dusting Joby Round. Swish !

Tom Bowling all his foes despatches,  
And Joby's shirt is doffed ;  
His back the cat-o'-nine-tails scratches,  
And——

I've wore that out ; it don't go like it did to begin with. What's that light ahead ? That's a public-house. Sorrow's dry, and so am I. Give us some coppers, mister. They might stare to see a man in cords offerin' a sovereign for a quart o' beer.'

'I haven't any coppers,' said Aaron.

'Give us a shilling then,' returned Mr. Bowling. 'I'll pay you back again, fair doos. Go in yourself, go into the parlour like a lord, and look as if I didn't belong to you.'

Aaron, since his companion would not be dissuaded, entered the house with him, and did his best to look unconcerned and unconscious of the existence of Mr. Bowling, who drank with irritating slowness, and was so lavish of compliments to a dark-eyed barmaid that he drew upon himself the observation of all the people in the bar. Half in terror and half with a throb of joy, Aaron saw that the sea-

man's eyes were bleared and that his swarthy face was flushed. Mr. Bowling, in anticipation of the evening's work, had been drinking heavily all day. Until now his excitement had fought off the effect of his potations, but excitement was now turning traitor with him, and had begun to help him on the downward road.

They left the house almost together, but nobody supposed they were companions or had anything in common, and they reached the town without meeting any adventure by the way. The London train started at midnight, and there was still an hour and a half to spare. They spent the greater part of this time in roaming about the streets, and Aaron trembled from first to last lest he should encounter some one to whom both he and Mr. Bowling would be known. When at length they made for the station, his dreadful partner insisted upon buying a bottle of rum from the third-class refreshment-buffet. He was drunk enough by this time to produce a handful of sovereigns when he came to pay, and this exciting the

suspicious of a railway detective who happened to observe it, Aaron's nerves must needs suffer for his companion's indiscretion.

The detective, after a word or two with Mr. Bowling (who was almost sobered by learning the occupation of the grave and authoritative stranger who accosted him), approached Aaron as he walked moodily upon the platform, and touched him on the shoulder.

'I beg your pardon, sir. Are you Mr. Whittington? A solicitor, of Castle Barfield?'

'Yes,' said Aaron. The answer hung fire a little, but he remembered in time the name his companion had fixed upon for his wearing.

'Oh,' said the detective, 'it's all right then, I dare say. Will you step a yard or two this way, sir?' Aaron obeyed. There was nothing, so far, to be in the least alarmed at, but there was such a tremor in his knees that he could scarcely stand. 'That fellow in the suit of rough cords there has got a handful of sovereigns. I thought he looked a bit suspicious.'

‘That’s all right,’ said Aaron, doing his best to look and speak unconcernedly. ‘He came by the money honestly. I know the man.’

‘He said you did, sir. I was bound to ask you. I’m a detective on duty here, and it’s my business, of course, to look at a thing like that.’

‘He’s an old sailor,’ said Aaron, more at ease. ‘He won’t have the money long, I fancy, but he seems to think there’s no end to it. Perhaps I’d better speak a word to him ; he may take notice of me when he wouldn’t of a stranger.’ He hoped to shake off the detective, and was annoyed when the man followed him into the refreshment-room. ‘I say, my man,’ he said, touching Mr. Bowling somewhat timidly, ‘this gentleman is a detective, and he tells me you’ve been flourishing your money about here in a very foolish way. Put it up, there’s a good fellow. I’ll ride in the same carriage with him up to town,’ he added, ‘and see that nobody meddles with him.’

‘Now, that’s a gentleman after my own heart, that is,’ cried Mr. Bowling. ‘That’s Mr. Whittington, that is—the respectablest lawyer in England. You take a drink along of me, Mr. Whittington?’

‘No, thank you,’ said Aaron; ‘and I shouldn’t advise you to drink any more.’

‘I’m all right,’ responded Mr. Bowling. ‘I’m in A 1 condition fore and aft.’

When Mr. Whittington opened his purse the detective saw the glitter of gold there, and his keen eye took notice of the fact that one compartment was stuffed fat with bank-notes. He had no objection to taking a shilling from Mr. Whittington, and being a good fellow was honestly pleased, when the train came up, to see the sailor bestow himself in the same third-class compartment with the solicitor.

‘Any luggage, sir?’ he asked, touching his hat.

‘No,’ said Aaron, ‘my luggage is in town already.’

The guard’s whistle sounded, the train

moved, and when they were once clear of the platform Mr. Bowling leapt to his feet and, digging at Aaron's chest with the rum bottle he carried, cried—

‘Hooray for the Bawlkan Hills! Eh, mister?’

In the downright desperation with which Mr. Bowling inspired him, Aaron found courage to rise and thrust him by the shoulders to a seat.

‘There are people on both sides of us,’ he said. ‘Can’t you keep quiet? Do you want to tell everybody where we’re going?’

‘All right, shipmet,’ said Mr. Bowling, ‘I’ll be quiet. Look here, you keep me quiet. You ain’t much for pluck, you know, but you’re dead nuts on caution. Now, what’s the matter with me is, for caution I ain’t to be valued alongside of the toss-up of a blind beggar’s farden. As for pluck, it’s beknown everywhere that Thomas Bowling—— Look here, governor, what was the name I given myself two or three hour ago? A new name’s like boots, it must

be wore and wore until it's hardly fit to wear no longer afore it feels easy on you. Have a drink? Then I'll have one myself. What do you say? Don't 'like rum? What *are* you a going to do with your share of the money when you gets it?'

Mr. Bowling advanced this question with a ludicrous air of drunken astonishment.

'Now,' he said, 'I'm a going to soak this here medal into my head; that's what I'm a going to do.' He drew the watch and its appendages from his pocket, and, rising, held up the medal to the wretched oil lamp which burned in the roof of the carriage. Aaron looked at it with greedy eyes and heart. 'Can't make it out,' said Mr. Bowling, staggering in the middle of the jolting compartment; 'see if you can read it.' He held it waving and revolving before Aaron's face.

'How do you think I can see it if you hold it like that?' demanded Aaron; 'lend it me.'

Mr. Bowling winked with a look of cunning and shook his head.

‘Not yet awhile, governor,’ he said. ‘When we come to pen and ink and paper you shall copy it, and then you can soak it in at your convenience.’ He stuffed the watch and chain back into his pocket and resumed his seat. ‘Here’s some of the beans,’ he continued figuratively, as he drew five sovereigns from the same pocket and surveyed them in his great brown palm. ‘Where we’re agoing to there’s fifty thousand of them shiners a lying buried. We’ll show ’em daylight—we’ll make ’em fly.’

A jerk of the carriage disturbed his equilibrium at this moment, and he dropped the gold. Aaron fell upon his knees and chased the rolling coins into corners until he had caught them all.

‘Put them up,’ he said savagely, ‘and don’t be a fool. You’ll have neither them nor the others long if you behave in this way.’

‘I’m a going to be rich for life,’ returned Mr. Bowling, pocketing the recovered coins; ‘and now—being as you’re my pardner—I’ll tell you how. For a chum is a chum, though he’s never so chumly.’

‘Look here, governor, I had a pal once by the name of Derrick, Billy Derrick, which inherited a fortune of one thousand pound.’ Aaron bent forward to listen, and pretended to be much interested. Mr. Bowling, breathing rum and tobacco, continued his narrative with drunken gravity. ‘This is how to be rich for life, mister. This Billy Derrick has a fortune left him of a thousand pound. He was a middle-aged man, and when he went to the lawyer’s for to draw it, the lawyer says, “If I was you, Mr. Derrick”—he called him Mr. Derrick, and bespoke him like as if he’d been the master of the finest craft as sails—“if I was you,” says he, “I should sink this money.” “Should you?” says Billy, ironical; “sink yourself,” he says. “I’m going to stick to this, now I’ve got it.” “That’s all right,” says the lawyer, “but what I mean is, sink it in a ’nuity.” Maybe you know what a ’nuity is, governor.’

‘Of course I know what an annuity is,’ returned Aaron. ‘Any child knows that.’

‘Any shore-going swab may know shore-

going tackle,' said Mr. Bowling, with a lurch. He leaned back sullenly, and discerning the rum bottle, took it by one hand, drew the cork with his teeth and drank. He seemed after this to forget his momentary pique, and leaning forward with the bottle between his knees, continued his narrative. 'Afore they'd give Billy anything on this here 'nuity he had to go afore a doctor, and when he hears this, says Billy to me, "Georgey, my boy," he says. No ;' Mr. Bowling paused and looked introspective. 'I don't think it was Georgey—Henry I think it was. Call it Henry. What's it matter? "Henry," he says, "I'm going to have these money-lending fellows. The less they think I'm going to live, the more they'll give me." That,' explained the narrator thickly, 'is how the 'nuity ropes is pulled. Long life, low pay ; high pay, short service.'

'Yes,' said Aaron, nodding, 'I know all about the system. Go on. I think I'll have a drop of rum now if you don't mind.'

Mr. Bowling handed him the bottle, and

he sipped. Mr. Bowling, inspired by this example, took a deep pull on receiving the bottle back again, as Aaron had anticipated.

‘Well, what does Billy Derrick do? Why, being a sensible fellow, he goes off upon the drink. He keeps upon the drink until he gets the horrors like a lord. Then he goes afore the doctor. The doctor says, “This man won’t last three years,” he says. Billy Derrick gets the very highest rate of pay, and what’s he do? Why he signs a pledge with himself never to get drunk again except upon a Sunday. He’s a drawing that there pay now, as a natural consequence,’ and the very last time I see him, “Joseph,” he says—no, “Henry,” he says, “go and do likewise if ever you come into money.” And likewise,’ concluded Mr. Bowling, ‘I intend to do.’

‘That was a very shrewd fellow,’ said Aaron, clumsily trying to seem genial and at ease. ‘I say, that’s capital rum of yours. I’ll have another drop if you don’t mind. I’d no idea that rum was half as good.’

‘Eh?’ said Mr. Bowling, with a laugh, ‘you’re a beginning to find out what’s good, are you? You wait till we gets back from the Bawlkan Hills, and I’ll show you what high living’s like. Here—fair doos. Don’t empty the bottle.’

Aaron was making a great show of drinking, but pressed his tongue against the mouth of the bottle, so that none of its contents escaped. Mr. Bowling seized the rum greedily when Aaron surrendered it, and drank as if he slaked an innocent thirst with water.

‘I shan’t drink no more to-night,’ he said then, recorking the bottle and setting it down in one corner. ‘I’ve got to keep my head clear, because I’m going to soak that medal in afore I go to bed. Wheer’s my ticket?’

‘I’ve got both tickets,’ returned Aaron. ‘Don’t talk any more. I’m tired. I want a nap.’

He had never been further from sleep in his lifetime, but he lay back in a corner with closed eyes and folded arms. Just then the train began to slacken pace, and in a little

while had drawn up at a platform, where Aaron, to his sudden horror, heard the cry of 'Coventry—Coventry.' To the criminal coward the filmiest cobweb line that spider ever spun looks like a halter. Sarah was in Coventry. Anything unlikelier than her presence at the railway station an hour after midnight would be hard to fancy, and yet the thing *might* be. He shrunk into his corner as if he would fain have disappeared into the woodwork, and kept his eyes fast closed lest he should see the face he most dreaded in the world. Not the apparition of Job Round himself could have appalled him like the apparition of Job Round's daughter. That—on reflection—appears to be the first favourable thing which has been set down in these pages concerning Aaron Whittaker.

The train went on again, and Aaron, making his eyes look as languid as he could, half opened them for a glance at Mr. Bowling. No sooner had they touched him than they

opened wide and glistened with a light of triumph. Mr. Bowling was fast asleep.

The train sped on, and Aaron watched with a constant eagerness which set his breath labouring and his heart beating. Sometimes Mr. Bowling would move his feet restlessly, and at other moments would grumble in his sleep, and then Aaron's forward-crouching attitude of attention would be suddenly abandoned, and he would slip back into his corner and lie there with closed eyes. There was a second pause at Bletchley, and Aaron's head spun with fear that some passenger, bound thence to London, would enter and spoil the solitude he wanted, but the train went on again, and he and his companion were still alone. When he judged that they were within a few miles of Willesden he began to push Mr. Bowling, at first softly, but more and more heavily, and then to shout at him. 'Hi!—wake up! We're nearly there;' but to his immense relief he could not even elicit so much as a grunt of remonstrance.

He slipped a hand gently, gently, gently into Mr. Bowling's pocket, and the tips of his fingers coming in contact with the watch-chain he drew it gingerly forth, whipped it into his own great-coat pocket, and plunged into his corner seat again. He had scarcely done this when the train began to slacken speed. He had meant to have Mr. Bowling's money too. What was the use of the medal alone, if he left Mr. Bowling the wherewithal to follow him? A mistake—all a mistake. He would slip the watch back again. There was no time; the brake was jarring on the rails already. He would do it when they had once passed the station. He would tell Bowling—'You see how fair I mean to play with you. I could have had the medal to myself whilst you were asleep in the train.' Then he could take another and a better chance, and could strip his partner clean. That would be best done in a foreign city, where the man should have less means of following him. He had meant

to escape at Willesden, but he saw now that that was a mere folly.

While these thoughts chased each other through his mind a man came round for tickets.

‘This fellow wanted to go to sleep,’ said Aaron, pointing to Mr. Bowling. ‘This is his ticket.’

The collector took it with a mere glance at the sleeping man, and was just about to close the door when a servant of the company leaped into the carriage and sat down opposite Aaron. There would be no chance to put the watch back now, and when Mr. Bowling awoke it was a hundred to one that his first impulse would be to look for it. If he would but sleep till Euston! Nothing but flight for it now—nothing but flight! Aaron trembled and flushed, and paled and flushed again. His joints were loosened with a shaky horror, and his back-bone felt so useless to him that he could have fallen in folds like an empty sack. Only here and there a man tastes the full nausea of fear, because there is only here and

there a man who has the palate to be touched by all its flavours.

Once more the train stopped, and the noise of the jarring brake seemed fit to awaken the dead, to Aaron's fancy, but Mr. Bowling slumbered on. The company's servant was first at the door, and being sleepy, fumbled somewhat at the handle, unconscious that the man who stood behind him was ready to tear him with his hands. The door was opened at last, the way was clear, and Aaron darted from the carriage with one fearful backward glance at Mr. Bowling, who still lay huddled in his corner with his bandaged hand depending towards the floor.

He did not dare to go too fast, lest he should excite observation and inquiry. He knew little of London, and did not know where to bestow himself at that hour, and so he walked till morning dawned, and the streets grew busy. Then he breakfasted at a somewhat frowsy coffee-house, and, learning that he could have a bed there, determined to snatch a

few hours of rest, and retired upstairs with strict injunctions that he should be called at noon. The pale day stared at him through the yellow window-blind and chased sleep from his eyelids for a long time, and his fears pricked at him so that every now and then a groan escaped him. But at last Nature would have her way, and he slept.

Being roused at mid-day he washed and took a second meal, and having discharged his bill, sallied into the streets, where, in spite of the absorbed indifference of the dwellers in great towns, a dozen people noticed his new habit of looking over his shoulder.

He was too unsettled, too frightened, too lonely, and too helpless to make a single inquiry of anybody as yet, and the streets were such a terror to him that he spent most of the day in coffee-houses. In one of these, towards evening, he grew suddenly courageous. An evening paper supplied him with solace and resolve.

Perhaps it was something in his own circumstances which sent him that afternoon to

the police intelligence. He read there that at Marylebone Police Court that morning a labouring man, who refused his name and address, had been brought up on a charge of drunkenness. The labouring man had been awakened in a carriage at Euston Station, had professed to discover a robbery, had created a violent disturbance, had been removed with much difficulty by the police, and had repeatedly assaulted them on the way to the station. There it had been discovered that he was possessed of ninety-nine pounds ten shillings in gold, and seven shillings in silver. This being naturally regarded as a suspicious circumstance, the labouring man, who wore earrings of gold wire, had the air of a sailor, and was disfigured by a great scar, was remanded in order that inquiries might be made concerning him. It appeared further that the prisoner was still under the influence of liquor, and that his bearing in court was that of a madman.

Aaron Whittaker suddenly became at ease.

He bought a portmanteau of a largish size, with some necessary things to fill it, and he took a berth in the steamship 'Orinoco,' bound for Marseilles. He bought also a Continental Bradshaw and the best map of Turkey to be had for money. He got aboard the steamer, and in half an hour he was to be away. He went down to his berth, spread the map of Turkey on his bed below the port-hole light, and with the watch and chain and medal in his hand, began a search for the latitude and longitude he wanted. Whilst he was thus absorbed the door opened suddenly, and Aaron thrust the precious medal beneath the pillow and turned with quaking nerves and startled eyes.

His face went ghastly when he saw that his visitor wore the uniform of the police.

'I must trouble you to come with me if you please,' said the new-comer with unnecessary politeness.

'Why,' began Aaron, but his tongue clove

to the roof of his mouth, and he could go no further.

‘ You are wanted,’ said the officer, ‘ for being concerned in the death of Job Round, of Castle Barfield. You may say anything you like, but it’s my duty to caution you that anything you say will——’

The officer saw that Mr. Whittaker was not likely to say anything just then, and deferred his warning.

The prisoner had fainted.



## BOOK VI.

*HOW THE RAINBOW GOLD GREW REAL.*

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### CHAPTER I.

A DINGY room, with a low discoloured ceiling, a rusty grate, a carpetless floor, and a vulgar paper rotting from the walls. A room twelve feet by ten, or thereabouts, having for sole furniture a bed with a dirty counterpane, a burly kitchen chair, a spidery miniature washing-stand, a chest of drawers, with half a brick under one corner in lieu of a foot, and a triangular piece of broken mirror fastened by a cunning arrangement of tintacks to the wall beside the curtainless window. Hanging about the walls half a dozen unframed oil-paintings, no one of them quite finished. Seated on the

bed, and staring into the rusty grate with a far-away smile, Clem Bache.

The room bespoke poverty, and Clem's figure was in accord with it. He was greatly aged ; there were grey hairs on his temples, and his crown was tonsured. His forehead was lined, his eyes were larger and brighter than they should have been, the temples were hollowed and showed the modelling of the skull.

From the window stretched far and far away a vast desert of house-tops, and on its furthest border rose a dome, surmounted by a ball and a cross. The sky was of a faint smoky blue, the sun was at the zenith, and the heat was sweltering. Through the open window rose a constant surge of sound which made much the same accompaniment to thought as the roar of a sea heard inland, and bore the same indistinct melodies and fancies with it.

Clem sat smiling at the rusty grate, twirling a letter in his thin fingers. A faint perfume of roses exhaled from the letter, and half a dozen

dead rose leaves lay on the boarded floor between his feet. In the stifling heat there was a hint of mournfulness in the odour of the dead leaves, and there was more than a hint of mournfulness in Clem's far-off smile.

Footsteps sounded on the uncarpeted stairs without, and Clem looked up and listened, while the absent smile faded slowly. The steps came higher and paused upon the landing. He leaned forward from his seat upon the bed, and opened the door.

'Ah, Mr. Armstrong,' he said cheerfully. 'Come in, sir, come in. You here as well, David? Come in.'

'Ay,' said Armstrong; 'David's come to have a look at ye, Clem. And this,' looking about him with eyebrows mildly raised, 'is your new doemiceel. I'll not say I think much of it.'

David, a big-nosed man, with a face of cheerful simplicity and good nature, entered the room and shook hands with Clem. He was dressed in precise black; his boots, his hat, his

coat, his gloves were all black and glossy. The day was hot, but he was cool and rosy; the day was dusty, but his garments were speckless. His mild blue eyes were the eyes of William Armstrong purged of dreams—they were as mild as his father's, but they had no suggestion of the father's humour, and none of his absence of mind. He looked about the room and confirmed his father's judgment of it.

‘I can't say that I think much of it either,’ he said.

‘I don't think much of it myself,’ returned Clem, with a humorous grimace. ‘I find it better not to think much of it. I think of it as little as I can. It serves, and has to serve.’

‘Now, there's the point, Clem,’ said Armstrong. ‘It serves in a way, but not because it has to serve.’

‘Yes,’ said Clem, with an air of obstinacy which was not common with him; ‘it serves, and has to serve.’

‘Now, Clem, be a good lad, and listen to reason. I'll not ask you to come and live with

us without paying us, but we'll give you a room that shall have the merit of being clean if it has no other, and it shall be just a wee bit better furnished than this one, and we'll charge ye the rent ye pay here. And, in addition to that, we'll thank ye for coming. What do you say, David?'

'I say,' replied David, 'that if his head is only half screwed on, he'll come. This place is like a pigsty.'

'There's David's wife's a Castle Barfield woman,' said Armstrong, 'and we'd all be old friends together. The shop's doing far better than it used to do in the old place, though I'm a burthen on it, and like to be. But David's wife is just invahlyable. We've a room to spare in the house, and we've had it furnished expressly for you. Now come away, lad, and let us have no more trouble with you.'

'It's kind of you,' Clem answered, 'and it's like you, but I can't come, Mr. Armstrong. I can't be a burthen on my friends.'

‘Listen to him,’ cried Armstrong. ‘Man alive, we’ll allow ye to pay your way.’

‘I couldn’t pay my way,’ said Clem, with a sort of resolved gentleness. ‘I couldn’t pay what I should cost you. If you and David could afford it, it would be another matter, but you can’t. You have weights enough already, and I won’t consent to be another. Don’t ask me. If you could afford to keep me, you should have your way. Don’t think I stay away from any sense of pride or any want of friendship. The plain truth of the matter is, and you both know it, you are as poor as I am.’

‘Talk to him, David,’ said Armstrong. ‘Just tell him what I’d tell him if the house were mine.’

‘Look here, Clem,’ said David, in obedience to this appeal. ‘I shall begin to think that your head isn’t screwed on properly if you go on in this way. It’s ridiculous to be proud with us, you know. I’m making thirty-five shillings a week. The shop profits average

nine shillings. David, the second, earns seven-and-sixpence. There's my father, my wife, myself and four children. Seven people, you see. Sevens into fifty-one and sixpence is seven and fourpence and a fraction over of two-sevenths of a penny. Anybody that can afford to join us and put seven and fourpence half-penny a week into the stock is a benefactor to the house, and raises the available average by a fraction.'

'That's an amazing head for figures,' said Armstrong admiringly. 'I suppose ye got that from your poor old mother, lad, for it's certain ye never got it from me. I've a general notion that there's a great potential bundle o' half-pence packed away in a five pound note, but I'll have to spend an hour in finding out how many.'

'Two thousand four hundred,' said David with a snap.

'That's a vary remarkable faculty,' Armstrong said. 'You're sure you're right, David?' David nodded. 'No mere guesswork?' David

shook his head. 'It's a remarkable and striking sign, Clem lad, of the over-crowded state of the labour market in this town o' London, that an aptitude for mental areethmetic—a cultivated aptitude that's reached a growth like this—can command no more than five an' thirty shillings a week.'

'Pooh!' said David. 'There's nothing remarkable in that. How many halfpence in a five pound note? office boy will tell you that if his head's screwed on properly.'

'I'd never the slightest little bit of a head for figures,' Armstrong said, musingly. 'A date would slip through my head like an empty needle through a piece o' calico. A story, or a vairse, or a game o' chess, or any useless toy o' that kind, would always stick.'

'Stories and verses won't stick in my head,' said David. 'If I counted the words in a story-book I could tell you a fortnight after how many there were, but if I read the book I should know nothing about it in a week.'

'Nonsense!' cried Clem, who was greatly

relieved to find the theme thus changed. 'When I was a little fellow—when I was less than I am now, I mean—you used to tell me stories. You were better than your father's bookshelves.'

'When I was a child,' returned David with great gravity, 'I thought as a child, and spoke as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things. I have to concern myself with facts, Clem.'

'Ay!' said Armstrong. 'Seven mouths to get fed every day. Four quarter days when rent's to pay. I've had to concern myself with the like facts in my time, David; chieils that winna gang, and downa be disputed. Is the letter from any o' the Castle Barfield folk, Clem?' he asked with odd abruptness.

'It's from Sarah,' returned Clem, who still twisted the envelope in his thin fingers.

'I guessed it from the rose leaves,' the old man said pointing to the floor, where the dead leaves lay between Clem's feet. 'That'll be from Clem's rose-bush?' Clem nodded with a

faint smile. Clem's rose-bush had been planted on Sarah's tenth birthday at the back of Konak Cottage, and still flourished there. 'All's well with her?'

'Yes,' said Clem, 'she says so. But poor old Round is breaking up, and now that the great case is over, he hasn't anything left to live for. He has lost everything—the last penny.'

'It isn't that would break him,' said Armstrong, 'but the mastiff heart of him couldn't bear to be beaten.'

'My father died of it,' said Clem, rising from his seat on the bed and walking to the open window.

''Twas a vary pretty work of Mr. Whitaker's altogether,' began Armstrong after a pause. 'He broke the heart of his old mother, he well-nigh killed the sweetest girl in the parish, he killed her father outright, and he ruined two honest men who had no more to do with his rascalities than I had.'

'Ah!' said David, 'it was a great mistake.

on your father's part, Clem, and on old Round's to fight the case at all. The damages claimed were excessive, but an arbitrator would have squared that in a week. As partners they were legally responsible for all young Whittaker's doings, and if their heads had been screwed on properly, they'd have recognised the fact.'

'First, and last,' Clem answered, 'the law costs were fifteen thousand pounds. We paid both sides, of course.'

'The blackguard's out there still, I suppose, said Armstrong. . 'If there are many of his equals in New South Wales, New South Wales is no nice place to live in, I'm thinking. What in the name of wonder did he do it for, Clem?'

'God knows!' said Clem. 'I suppose he wanted poor Job out of the way.'

'Ye think he fancied that Sarah would con-done that affair about the mine?'

'Yes. I always thought that his only motive. The man was fool as well as villain.'

'Was he fool enough for that?' asked

Armstrong. 'There was always a mystery in that matter, Clem, and none of us ever bottomed it. Nobody had a right to pay much heed to what *he* said, but he stuck out that he meant no more than to send him to sleep. Now, he could never be brought to say *why* he wanted to send him to sleep, and yet it's as clear as daylight that the dose he gave would never have been fatal, but for that weak heart of poor Job's which nobody knew of but yourself. Who'd have thought of that great giant having a weakness of the heart? Eh, man! I lost the lad I loved best in the world when I lost poor Job.'

'There was nobody but you and me who really knew him,' said Clem. 'And Sarah.'

'My heart's been lifted up in solemn thanksgiving for him, many and many a time,' said Armstrong. 'He died at the fittest hour; and though he died foully he could have done no better. Just when the judgment on his hot youth pounced down at his gates he was flown out o' reach.'

'I'll never grieve for a friend's death any more,' Clem said, quietly but sorrowfully. 'One more tired head on the pillow! Why should we cry for that?'

'Clem!' Clem turned round from the window at Armstrong's change of tone. 'Did y'ever associate that sailor fellow with Job's death in any way? That Bowling as he called himself.'

'No,' said Clem, in some amazement. 'Why should I?'

'It's a wild fancy o'mine, maybe,' answered the grey Scot, 'and I've nothing substantial to base it on. I've hunted a motive for that crime until my head's spun, and I can light on nothing. There's Coleridge has some wild talk about "motiveless malignance" in a certain kind o' nature, but he's hovering, in his customary fog, about Iago, who had a motive as plain as the nose on David's face. Look at the facts, Clem. To run away wasn't the fashion to bring Sarah back to him, if that was his hope. He was going to Marseilles. Why

Marseilles? And they found him with a map of Turkey spread out before him. Why Turkey? Now Clem, don't set me down for a madman, but where was Bowling's treasure buried? In Turkey. In the Balkan Hills. I make nothing of it. It's just a Pudding Bag Street that leads to nowhere.'

'You think that Job might have had the secret,' said Clem absently and almost uninterestedly. 'And they poisoned him to get it?'

'Man!' cried Armstrong in a voice which made his hearers start. 'Ye've hit it.' They both stared at him in surprise, and he, looking from one to the other, lost something of the look of light and certainty which had flashed into his eyes. 'Anyway,' he said, 'there'd be an intelligible motive. And that's a thing I've never happened on in my wildest dreams till this minute.'

'What a fool the fellow was,' said David. 'I read a case in the papers last week that reminded me of him. A man buys a packet of

stuff to kill rats. Next day his wife dies of poison. They find the rat-killing stuff locked up in a box and the key of the box in his pocket. Three weeks before he had persuaded his wife to insure her life, and had paid the first premium. Man's head wasn't half-screwed on,' concluded David. 'I could have made a better murderer myself.'

'They're stupid,' said his father. 'Whitaker buys salts o' morphine the very day Job Round dies of that same drug. The very night he administers it he buys a little flask of whiskey at the Barfield Arms. He leaves the flask with the salts of morphine mixed with the whiskey behind him on the table to tell everybody how the thing was done. That fatality o' folly is the thing, Clem, lad, that brings half the fools to the gallows.'

'Let us get away from this theme,' said Clem. 'Let us talk of something else.'

'As ye will,' responded Armstrong. 'But I'll have a look at that in the new light ye've thrown on it. We'll go back from a disagree-

able toepic to a pleasant one. How long'll it take you to pack up your bit duds, lad, and be ready to sail away to David's house?'

'You must change the theme again,' said Clem. 'That's done with.'

'It's not done with, yet awhile,' Armstrong answered, 'and it never will be done with till we find ye settled there.' Clem shook his head, with a mournful resoluteness. 'Silly lad!' cried the old man pettishly. 'What'll ye do here?'

'I shall get on very well,' said Clem. 'I have sold some wax flowers. Perhaps I can sell some more, and I have what's left out of the wreck.'

'Eight bob a week,' said David; 'twenty pounds sixteen shillings per annum.'

'What's that to live on by your lane, man?' cried Armstrong. 'Come and throw it into our little store and ye rob nobody, but treble the value of your own income.'

But Clem was deaf to entreaty and persuasion, and would stay where he was.

‘Must you have the plain truth?’ he said at length. ‘Well, you shall have it. I can tell it to the oldest friends I have. I am only fit to live alone. I have dark times. Leave me where I am. I must have quiet now and then. I am better here.’ He spoke these disjointed sentences with difficulty and evident reluctance.

‘What are the dark times, lad?’ asked Armstrong gently. ‘David, get away and walk in the street awhile.’

‘I’ll be back in ten minutes,’ said David, quietly obeying his father’s injunction.

‘What are the dark times, lad?’ Armstrong asked again. ‘I’m ashamed for you, Clem. I’ve felt like a father till ye this thirty year. And between man an’ man that love each other, there’s a mighty healing in communion. What are they?’

‘They’re times,’ said Clem, ‘when my own mind plays the part of the patient man’s wife to me.’

‘The patient man’s wife asked a question,’

said Armstrong. 'D'ye mind it, lad? "Dost thou still retain thine integrity?"' says she.'

'I'm bitter,' said poor Clem, leaning with folded arms on the chest of drawers, and averting his face from his companion. 'I'm bitter. You shouldn't have asked me. You should have left me to myself.'

'Ay, lad,' answered Armstrong, laying a hand on his shoulder. 'Ay, ay, ay.'

'Oh!' said Clem in a tone of self-mockery, 'Don't pity me, for Heaven's sake! It's wicked to rebel, no doubt; and a man should bear the hand of Providence patiently. A creature such as I am serves as a reminder to careless nurses. He gives wholesome people a comforting sense of contrast; and the Lord loveth whom He chasteneth. These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, serve to edify the observer.'

'Clem, I'm sorry for ye in my heart; I'm sorry, Clem. But don't think these things, lad; don't think them. There's a deep beyond the lowest.'

'Oh!' said Clem, 'there's real comfort. I

meet some poor wretch worse off than I am. There's a source from which one can draw peace of mind in plenty. Here's a man whose body's more twisted and tortured, who is hungry oftener than I am. There's a plaster for a sore. He fell out of a gayer paradise than mine into a hotter purgatory. Comfort! Comfort!'

'Clem, lad, come and live with us, dark days and all. Come to a little bit of love and human nature, lad, and warm your heart at it.'

Clem said nothing to this. He had left his real griefs unspoken, and found them now, as he had always found them, quite unspeakable. Sarah's life was spoiled, and there was no more joy for her, and there lay his sorrow; for it does happen now and again that a man loves a woman well enough to bind up all his happiness in hers. That she should be poor was much for Clem to bear, much more than his own poverty. But that her life should be emptied of gladness, that her heart should have been

broken by so worthless a rascal, and that all the long days of life should show her the same monotony of hopeless grey his own weary years spread before him, was a grief beside which his personal troubles were small indeed. He suffered because she suffered, and if she could have been happy he would have been at peace. There are people who accept this kind of love when they encounter it in fiction complacently enough, who would have no shadow of belief to give it in real life. And yet it is a real thing, though a rare one. And Clem's heart was too full of Sarah's troubles to have much room for the remembrance of his own, only after his own manner he chose to seem bitter over sorrows he despised, rather than show a secret which looked so sacred to him.

‘I'd think it a hard thing if ye doubted the welcome ye'd get,’ said Armstrong after a pause; ‘and there's nothing else to keep you here.’ To this Clem replied in effect that there was much else, and that he had never doubted the welcome. ‘Will ye promise me one thing,

Clem?' Armstrong at last was forced to ask him. 'Will ye come in case employment of any kind should put a little money in your pouch?'

'Why then,' said Clem with a sad smile, 'there would be no need to come; but if I could live with you and honestly feel that I should be no burden to you I would be very, very glad to do it. Don't think too ill of me for the things I said just now. The fit's over for the time. Here's David back again.' He opened the door, and waited for the steps which sounded on the stair.

'That's not David's footstep,' said Armstrong; but Clem, standing with one hand on the edge of the door, and looking towards the landing, did not appear to hear him.

It was not David, as the present appearance of a tarpaulin hat at the head of the stairs made manifest. Clem turned away, and the wearer of the tarpaulin hat came heavily up on to the landing and crossed it. As he passed the open door he turned his head and gave a casual look

into the room. He and Clem and Armstrong started and stared at the same instant. A second later the man had turned away, and flinging open the door of the opposite room he entered the chamber, turned and stared again, and closed the door.

‘Man alive!’ said Armstrong in a whisper.  
‘Did ye see who that was?’

‘Yes,’ returned Clem. ‘It was that fellow Bowling.’

## CHAPTER II.

CLEM's sense of fun had been tickled by that fellow Bowling half-a-dozen years ago. Apart from the facts that Mr. Bowling was a persistent romancer, and that towards the close of his career at the farm he had fallen into a habit of excessive drinking, Clem knew of nothing to his disadvantage. An occasional bout of drinking was not so uncommon a thing amongst the farm labourers of Castle Barfield that a farmer's son was likely to have any very urgent call to be indignant or disgusted at it. We take these things pretty much as we find them, unless we are animated by a spirit of social reform, in which case we leave them pretty much as we find them. Mr. Bowling had not been much worse than his brethren, and he had one redeeming feature in Clem's eye. He was

a decided oddity, and if there had remained a possibility of laughing at anything in these mournful days the crooked little poet would have welcomed Mr. Bowling's presence on the scene with actual heartiness.

But Clem began to form new opinions with respect to Mr. Bowling, opinions so flattering to that gentleman's tenderness of heart and general goodness of nature, that if anybody had expressed them in old days he would most certainly have laughed at them outright. Of course Clem was willing to believe in human goodness everywhere, but he was not prepared to encounter a blushing delicacy of generous sentiment in Mr. Bowling. Yet it was precisely this unexpected characteristic which began to declare itself.

The heat of the summer day had parched and baked all London, but towards evening a little breeze arose in the north-west and fanned the street with a faint sense of refreshment and returning coolness. As Clem sat at his open window, looking dreamily and sadly over the

desert of house tops to where the great dome lay in a pale purple on the smoky amber of the evening sky, this breeze visited him with stray odours of the country, hinting of green trees and trodden grasses, and field and garden flowers. He fell into a day dream, and his spirit wandered back into old Staffordshire. He heard no more the rolling of London's tide, but the rooks were cawing and the bells were ringing after church, as was their wont on summer Sunday evenings, and deep peace was settling down on the hills that lay above Jacob's Ladder, and on all the wide-spread landscape visible from the highest of their gentle eminences. Job was alive again, Sarah was in the full bloom of youth and happiness, and Clem himself had got back to the days of peace and plenty and content of heart. There was not even for the moment that underlying sense of the present which, for the most part, informs such day dreams with a spirit of sadness. He had forgotten so completely that he could com-

pletely remember, and altogether to remember is to live over again.

A knock at the door recalled him to the sordid room he sat in. Mr. Bowling's head and shoulders came round the edge of the door, and Mr. Bowling touched the fore-lock of old Father Time with a respectful fore-finger.

'My service to *you*, young governor,' said the intruder, sliding into the room. 'If you happen to be a smoker, cap'n, here's a handful of chice cigars as I happened to have come across of at the docks, as ain't no use to me, being a man as finds a pipe agreeable, and likewise a chew, but the fire too hot and the smoke too mild in a chice cigar for a man like me.'

Mr. Bowling's beard had grown quite grey, and his head, except for the Father Time fore-lock and the merest fringe of hair above the ears and the nape of the neck, was glossy bald. These changes made the coffee-brown of his skin look darker than ever, by force of contrast. As he spoke he came creaking on tip-

toe into the room, and held out a handful of tough-looking, dark-coloured cigars towards Clem.

‘I’m very much obliged to you, I’m sure,’ Clem answered. ‘It’s very kind of you to offer them, but I don’t smoke. I suppose you remember me?’

‘Surely,’ said Mr. Bowling. ‘Ah!’ He sighed and looked about him. ‘The shillings for odd jobs he given me.’ The sigh and the glance bespoke a recognition of the difference between this and former times.

‘Are you living in London?’ Clem inquired.

‘Yes, young governor,’ responded Mr. Bowling, touching his forelock. ‘I am a-working at the docks, nigh by here, and a doing pretty well with my respectful service, being elevated for to be a ganger.’

‘I’m glad to hear it,’ said Clem. ‘Have you been living long in this house?’

‘No, cap’n,’ replied Mr. Bowling. ‘I can’t.

say as I have. In p'int of fact I came here yesterday. It's handy for my work.'

'Have you been here ever since you left Castle Barfield?' asked Clem. Not that he wanted to know, but the man seemed to mean kindly, and he could not be altogether cold with him.

'Yes,' said Mr. Bowling. 'I've been here, by which I mean to say I've been in London ever since. I'm a-doing well, cap'n, but I could find it in my heart to be sorry for leavin' Castle Barfield. I took a fancy, as a man might say, for rural ockipation, so to speak, cap'n, and I'm sorry as I so behaved as to give occasion for to be throwed over. Might I make so bold as to ask how the old governor is?'

'My father?' asked Clem, and Mr. Bowling nodded. 'My father died a year ago.'

'Ale and stout he looked,' said Mr. Bowling almost with an air of sentiment, 'as if he might ha' lived to be a hundred. And the other gentleman, young governor, as you used to be about with a good deal; the gentleman as I

used to earn a shilling now and then by carrying of a letter as you would send to him?' He set his head on one side, opened his mouth and scratched his chin as if in a half pensive effort of memory. 'Job Round, Esquire, cap'n, was the gentleman's name, if I am not mistook. A lofty figure of a gentleman, with a kind of a chaffing way with him.'

'Mr. Round is dead also,' said Clem, who began to find Mr. Bowling's intrusion painful, and yet in the native tenderness of his heart could find (or hardly wish to find) any means of letting him see as much.

'What?' cried the other in a loud voice of surprise. Clem looked up at him, and his manner changed. 'Dead?' he said in a sort of half inward whisper. 'That hearty gentleman. Dead! Excuse me, young governor, what did he die of?'

'He was poisoned,' said Clem, rising agitatedly. 'You must not talk to me of these things. You had better go.'

'Pisoned?' cried Mr. Bowling. 'Why, no

amount of pison would ha' killed him. I mean—he looked like that. Who pisoned him?'

'I really can't talk about these things to you,' Clem answered, waving his thin hands nervously against him. Armstrong's strange suspicion came into his mind, and though he had thought it wild enough at first, and had no reason for thinking it better founded now, it hurt him.

'Pisoned!' said Mr. Bowling. 'Who pisoned him? What for? Did he pison himself?'

'No,' said Clem, 'he was poisoned by a man named Whittaker.'

'The Lord!' cried Mr. Bowling, falling back a pace and glaring at Clem. 'Whittaker? Young Whittaker?'

'Yes,' said Clem. 'Go away, there's a good fellow. I can't talk of these things. They—they hurt me. Go away.' He laid a hand on the seaman's arm and urged him from the room. 'Come again another time. I can't talk of these things. Go away.'

Bowling, staring wildly at him, suffered

himself to be pushed from the room, but retreated slowly step by step, and was still staring open-eyed, with a visible horror in his face, when Clem closed the door between them. It was some time before the nervous agitation which had impelled him to drive Bowling from the room had so far subsided that he could even begin to ask why he had been so shaken. The story was an old one now, and had been spoken of, in his hearing, a thousand times. Only that afternoon he had spoken of it; but he had spoken with old friends who knew his grief and partly shared it, and not with a rough stranger who laid a hard hand upon his wound out of mere curiosity. But by-and-by Mr. Bowling's face, as he had stood glaring in the half light beyond the doorway, came back to him with an active horror in it, and Armstrong's wild fancy returned with it. It was altogether mad and fantastical, and he knew it; but the madness and fantasy made it none the less exigent in his mind. He dismissed it, and it came again. He had not the remotest disposition to a real

was dark and gloomy. The cold wind and the gathering clouds alike threatened rain.

He closed the window and sat down behind it to look out vacantly at the darkening sky and the lights that twinkled more and more brightly here and there. Again, as on the previous evening, Mr. Bowling tapped at his door and slid his head and shoulders into the room in advance of the rest of his person.

‘My respectful service, cap’n,’ said Mr. Bowling. ‘If you’ll excuse me a making so bold; here’s a bottle of sherry wine as happened to be made a present of to me to-day, and what’s the good of throwin’ away a cultivated article like that upon a man like me? So I’ll made so free as to leave it, cap’n, with my respectful service.’

He had advanced into the room, and now, setting the bottle on the chest of drawers, he made as if to retire, but Clem rose to intercept him. The man seemed to mean kindly still, but Clem could not have his poverty pitied in this way, and could bear still less that Mr.

Bowling should attempt to relieve it, under any subterfuge, however delicate.

‘You are very kind,’ he said, ‘but I—I don’t drink wine.’ For the last year or two this had been perfectly true, but he felt disingenuous, notwithstanding. ‘No.’ He had seized the bottle and was forcing it back on Mr. Bowling. ‘I can’t take it. Really I cannot take it. I appreciate your kindness, but really you must not bring these things to me. I am not in want of them.’

‘You ain’t got a light, young governor,’ returned Mr. Bowling, for sole answer, ‘I’ll go and fetch one.’

‘No,’ cried Clem, ‘I am not in want of a light, thank you.’

‘Young governor,’ said Mr. Bowling, touching him lightly with the bottle, ‘I’ll fetch a light, and if you ain’t too proud to drink a glass along of a old servant I should take it as a kindness. I’m a lonely cove, young governor, and you likewise are a lonely—personage.’ He substituted this word for the other in haste,

and was evidently so anxious to conciliate that Clem had not the heart to refuse him. What if the man bored him for half an hour? It was not so late that he could not feign business and go out to avoid him. Mr. Bowling meeting with no further opposition, set the bottle on the chest of drawers and retired, returning a moment later with a candle in a ginger-beer bottle, which he set upon the mantelpiece.

He brought a tumbler with him, and having wiped it with great care with the end of his neckerchief, he set it down beside the sherry bottle, and produced a pocket knife, with a blade of which he dexterously drew the cork. When he had filled the tumbler he proffered it to Clem, who declined it as politely as he could, but firmly. Mr. Bowling thereupon emptied it himself, and took an uninvited seat upon the edge of the bed.

‘Young governor,’ he said then, ‘if agreeable to you, I should like to ask you a question ; maybe two.’

‘Yes,’ said Clem. ‘What are they?’

‘If young Mr. Whittaker poisoned Joby Round, Esquire, was it known what he poisoned him with, and wheerfor?’

‘I won’t answer any idle questions on that subject,’ Clem answered. ‘If you have any real reason for asking I will tell you.’ Armstrong’s odd fancy was back again in Clem’s mind.

‘I have a reason for asking. If I can’t find out what I want without telling you, maybe I’ll tell you what the reason is. Meaning no offence, young governor, but having a reason, though a rough cove, and never educated to your pitch and standpoint. Was it known what he poisoned him with and wheerfor?’

‘It was known with what he poisoned him, but why he did it was never known.’

‘What did he poison him with?’

‘He used a drug called salts of morphine, and he administered it to Mr. Round in a glass of whisky.’

‘Salts in a glass o’ whisky,’ said Mr. Bowling, reflectively. ‘Is them there salts used

for anything, young governor? To put a cove to sleep, for instance?'

'They are used to procure sleep,' said Clem. Mr. Bowling leaning forward rested his chin upon his hand, his elbow on his knee, and looked thoughtfully at the floor.

'And he given him so much,' he said slowly, 'he never waked up again. Was that it?'

'That was it,' Clem answered. What was to come of this he could not guess, but Mr. Bowling's manner, which was serious and almost judicial, argued an object. He waited nervously to know what it might be.

'Was he caught?' was the man's next question. Clem nodded only. 'Tried?' Clem nodded again. 'Found guilty?' pursued Mr. Bowling leaning forward with sparkling eyes. A third time Clem answered with a nod. 'Hanged?' cried Mr. Bowling half rising from his seat.

'No,' said Clem. Mr. Bowling fell back into his seat, sighed through his closed teeth, with the lips drawn back a little, and resumed

his former posture. 'He was sent into penal servitude for fourteen years.'

'And was it never guessed what he done it for?' asked the seaman, looking up at Clem, warily, from beneath his eyebrows. 'Never? Not by nobody? Not a shadder of a guess as to why he done it?' Clem shook his head in answer to each of these questions, which followed one another swiftly, and then answered:

'Nobody could ever give a reason for the act.'

'Nobody could never give a reason for the act. And was anything missed?' Once more Clem answered by a silent negative. 'Nothing? Come, there *was* a something missed, now? Come, tax your mind, young governor.'

'There was nothing missed so far as I know,' Clem responded.

'Not a—Wait a bit. How long after Joby Round, Esquire, was dead was young Whittaker caught?'

'Three or four days.'

‘Where was he?’

‘Aboard a steamboat bound for Marseilles.’

‘Aboard a steamboat bound for Marseilles?’ repeated Mr. Bowling. ‘Marseilles? You’re sure it was Marseilles, young governor, not Constantinople? Nor yet Varna? Nor yet Taganrog? Marseilles?’

‘Marseilles,’ said Clem. He felt like a man in a dream. ‘He may have been going to any one of the places you speak of, for when he was arrested he was studying a map of Turkey.’

‘Astudying of a map of Turkey, was he?’ Mr. Bowling smiled, darkly, as he looked at the floor. ‘And still you’re sure as there was nothing missed, young governor?’

‘There was nothing missed, so far as I know,’ Clem answered. He would not ask as yet what the man knew of the tragedy of five years back, though it was obvious he knew much of it. If his knowledge were a guilty one, Clem thought, he would hardly hover round the theme in this way, would hardly dare indeed to make allusion to it.

‘Not a watch?’ asked Mr. Bowling, suddenly, looking up and meeting Clem’s eyes bent full upon him in wondering inquiry. ‘Wasn’t Joby Round’s watch amissing when they found him? Who found him?’

‘I was the first who saw him after his death,’ said Clem. ‘No. The soldiers,’ he muttered to himself. ‘The watch was gone,’ he said aloud, ‘I remember now. The watch was gone. I thought,’ he murmured to himself again,—‘I remember thinking at the time that one of the soldiers might have stolen it.’

What was the mystery, and what did this man know of it?

‘The watch *was* gone, was it?’ The voice of Mr. Bowling recalled him to himself. ‘And when the thief as pisoned Joby Round was caught where did the watch go to?’

‘It was never known he had it,’ Clem responded. ‘I suppose it would remain in the hands of the police.’

‘That’s what it would do,’ returned Mr. Bowling. . . . ‘Young governor. One more

question. When Joby Round died he had a daughter. Did she come into any sum o' money?'

'No,' said Clem, with the dreamlike feeling deepening upon him. 'She was left poor, and is still poor.'

'Then,' cried Mr. Bowling, rising suddenly to his feet and casting his hands aloft with a great oath, 'it lies theer yet.' He suffered both hands to fall resoundingly upon his thighs.

It was all a mystery still, but the key to it lay in that mad guess of Armstrong's. Clem sprang to his feet in turn and seized Mr. Bowling by the clothes above his breast

'Why do you know of Job Round's death?' he panted. 'What hand had you in it?' Mr. Bowling stared at him in surprise, and Clem wound his thin fingers more closely in the fellow's garment. 'Tell me,' he said fiercely, 'tell me.'

'Well,' said Mr. Bowling, with open eyes, 'you're a good plucked 'un, you are. That I *will* say.' Clem dropped his hands, but still

stood white and panting and ready to spring anew. 'I don't like you none the worse for that, mind you, young governor. You keep still,' he said ponderously, and laid a forefinger on Clem's chest. 'You keep still, and perhaps I may tell you something as will make a difference to you. Let me think.' He stood glowering in the candle light, and what with his scowling look of thought, and the scar he bore, he looked to Clem's eyes almost terrible. 'I do not know,' he said, slowly turning his eyes on his companion, 'as I could have a better pardner. If you was to go to the police, where all the things as belongs to prisoners is kept, do you think they'd let you look at Joby Round's watch, young governor?'

'Why do you ask me that?'

'Never you mind just yet awhile. Could you get to see it? Yes or No.'

'I suppose I could if I could give a reason for wishing to see it.'

'Very well. You wait here a minute. I'm acoming back again, and I'm agoing to tell you

something as will make a difference to you. I'm agoing to show you the way to five-an'-twenty thousand golden pounds. Why? What am I agoing to be that kind to you for? I'm agoing to be that kind to you, because I'm agoing to do the same thing for myself, young governor, and it can't be done without a pardner. I'm agoing to take you for a pardner, because I think as you'll play fairplay and do fair doos. But first I am agoing to swear you in.'

Clem fell back into his seat by the window as Mr. Bowling strode heavily from the room. For aught he could tell the man was mad: for aught he could tell just then, he himself was mad—or dreaming. Mr. Bowling was back again with a dirty and misshapen volume in his hand. He offered to Clem an oath almost identical in terms to that he had offered to Aaron Whittaker, and Clem accepted it, and more to deal fairly with William Dean, otherwise known as Thomas Bowling. Mr. Bowling, in order to be precise and legal, mentioned

another *alias* or two, but Clem was too amazed already to find room for any sentiment of surprise at this.

Then Mr. Bowling, who had already closed the door, drew down the dingy blind, and in a growling murmur poured into Clem's ear the story he had told in the garden of Konak Cottage; with one addition, to the effect that Job Round was the lieutenant of the party Bonaventure commanded. Then he told the story of such a part of his connection with Aaron Whittaker as it suited him to have known, and expressed a casual regret for Job Round's decease. He declared stoutly that he had never known or guessed that any dangerous means were to be employed, and he swore that Whittaker had undertaken to offer Job a night's lodging at his own house and to attempt whilst he slept to transcribe the inscription on the medal.

Finally, he laid his hand flat on Clem's breast, and said:

'I own up, young governor, to this.' I

wanted more than my fair doos with Joby Round, and I got this for my pains, and I lost everything.' He touched the scar with the forefinger of his right hand, still keeping the left on his companion's breast. 'Then, young Whittaker, he wanted more than his fair doos with me, and you know what he comes to. This is the third time now, as pays for all. Nothing but what is on the square will ever see one penny of that golden money. Nothing but fair doos and playfairing conduct on both sides. Wheerfor, I shall relay my confidence on you, and shall look forward to be likewise treated.'

The man was a scoundrel by his own confession, and, consciously or no, had had a hand in the death of Clem's dearest friend and the father of the woman for whom Clem would have laid down his weary life at any hour. A compact with such a man to share a treasure so dubiously gained, and thick, to Clem's fancy, with the blood of many scoundrels (if no more than the tale he had just heard were true); was

in need of some sweetening and sanctification. And the sweetening and the sanctification both came at Love's great bidding. He would go in search of this treasure, and if Heaven so willed it, would find it for Sarah's sake, and would place it in her hands. The very warmth and light of life lay buried for her in those far-off hills. Weak as he was, he would have travelled there alone, and have plucked from the mountains the golden heart of the mystery they had guarded all these years.

of riches never so much as touched him. The money was Sarah's. Hope's blossoms were blossoms of fire, but the pure heart enfolded them unharmed, and their heat was a new life to them. Whatever her soul longed for she should have. The free hand that loved to reach out generously to the poor should no longer be withheld because of emptiness. She had longed to travel and to see the wonders of the fair world. She loved music, pictures, books. She should have them all. Her life should be bright again. His spirit brooded over her like a brooding bird. He blessed her in his heart.

‘Young governor,’ said Mr. Bowling, ‘I never did fair doos to Joby Round. He was a gentleman as would have done fair doos with any man if he'd ha' let him be. I used to say, but I never knowed so little as think it, as Joby Round had left that treasure theer because he hadn't got the pluck to go for it.’

There was a thing to turn the fire of hope to frost and ashes in Clem's heart. Not to have thought of that before! It was sheer

madness to think that if the treasure had lain there to Job's knowledge all these years he would have let it lie. The thing was all a dream.

'Are you out o' sorts, young governor?' asked Mr. Bowling, seeing these thoughts written on Clem's face, but not being able to read them. 'Take a drop o' sherry.' He filled the tumbler and held it to Clem's white lips. 'Take a heartier sip than that, young governor. It's the right sort. It's nigh as strong as brandy.'

'The treasure can't be there,' said Clem. 'I was mad not to think of that before. If he had known of its existence he would have brought it home. The whole thing's a dream.'

'Was that what curled you up like that, young governor?' demanded Mr. Bowling calmly as he recorked the bottle. 'That's what I was a-coming to. The treasure's there—somewhere within two mile of a little place called Strigli in the Bawlkan Hills. You'll find

himself in clover. A uncle dies an' leaves him a bit o' money. He thinks he'll lie by an' wait till everything's grown quiet. Then he has a little gell. It stands to reason he gets fond o' the gell. I never heard a word of Joby Round whilst I was a-working at your father's farm, young governor, but somebody ups and says, "He's hard," they says, "as nails, but he loves that gell like the apple of his eye." Well, he's got enough to live on, the little gell's mother dies, he stops to take care of the gell, and says he, "One of these days when I can spare the time I'll go and dig up that there golden money. When the gell's growed up and has got a husband to take care of her." Because, mind you, young governor, I never did fair doos to Joby Round. Joby Round was a man as joined in hunting this here treasure for a spree. He wasn't what you'd call a fool, but he had no more care for money than that there jug. I never did fair doos to Joby, not till last night when you said as he was dead. That squares things, that does.

I've had sence then to overhaul it, and I do fair doos to Joby Round.'

'But how do you know that Mr. Round never went back for the money himself?' asked Clem. 'He might have gone back for it, have secured it, and have lost it in any one of a thousand ways.'

'I know because he told me,' returned Mr. Bowling. "It lies theer yet," he says; "I've never had the spending of it. Wouldn't you like to know the latitude and longitude?" says he, "and take a pick and a shuffle and go and dig it up?" It's theer all right, young governor, never fear. You get a look at that there watch to-morrow, and we'll see whether it's theer or no.'

Mr. Bowling's confidence had a great effect on Clem, so great an effect that he began to build castles with as much ardour as before. But whatsoever castles he built he lived in none of them. They were all for the woman he loved, all for the best, the loveliest, the sweetest, saddest creature in the world, who

had suffered so cruelly; and should at last be glad again. For though the money could never have rejoiced him at all except in the joy it would have given him to dower her with it, it was going to bring all imaginary blessings to her. Clem's one great thought was—she could refill her emptied heart with charities—she would go about doing good. Through whatsoever crime-stained ways the money had travelled to its present dark resting-place, her hands would purify it, and the uses to which she would put it would be a sanctification.

He dreamed awake when he was left alone, and because the rain was on his roof in London, the rain was on the lonely hills. He saw them vast and dark and silent in the night, and he pierced their mystery and knew where the buried gold lay darkling underground. He dreamed awake, and Sarah's face was sweet and bright again, as he had known it years ago. He dreamed asleep, and on the background of the rainy hills her face shone before him by its

own effulgence like the face of some mild angel.

‘I shall go to work,’ said Mr. Bowling, who looked in upon him in the morning. ‘I shall go to work as if nothing had happened or was agoing to happen, cause if I didn’t I should most likely go off my head. I shall trust you solemn. I shan’t go with you and wait about outside, because I shall trust you. I shall be back here in the dinner-hour between one and two, in case you may be back again. If you finds anything, young governor, for the Lord’s sake, send a telegraph. Say “All right.” And here’s the bob to pay for it. We ain’t agoing to be to a shilling now. Remember what you’ve swore. But I’ll trust you, full and solemn.’

‘You may trust me,’ said Clem, simply. ‘I will deal honestly with you.’

Mr. Bowling left for work before six o’clock, and since it would have been absurd to start upon his expedition at such an hour, Clem stayed behind in a state of nervous impatience

and fluttering hope until eight. Then he set out to walk to Scotland Yard, a distance as he counted it of half a dozen miles. He was not a fast walker, but when he was in tolerable health he could bear to be afoot all day, and was stronger than a stranger looking at his dwarfed and twisted figure would have been likely to think him. The shabby little figure made its way through the streets, and no man regarded or took the trouble to have a thought about it. Nobody was in the least likely to guess it, but the shabby figure carried such a heart of hope within it that day as no other man bore in all London. The hungry little poet dreamed of wealth, but with such an unselfish passion in his dream as surely never poet felt before. Sometimes a doubt shook him, but not often, though many a time his heart of hope so trembled within him that his breath came short and he was fain to rest awhile looking in at shop windows which showed him nothing.

He reached Scotland Yard at last, and

found all the questions he had to put answered with an unexpected civility and patience. But the official whom he consulted could do no more than put him on the track.

‘A medal attached to the stolen watch,’ said Clem, ‘bore an inscription, and that inscription was the only indication of the whereabouts of a large sum of money, of which the owner is now known to have been possessed.’

‘Well,’ said the official, ‘we hear of stranger things than that at times. Where was the prisoner arrested?’ Clem told him. ‘Then the chances are, he would be taken at once to the nearest police court to be examined and remanded. They will have there a complete list of everything taken from him, and they will be able to tell you their present whereabouts. The man was tried at Stafford. They may have to refer you there.’

Clem took the address the official gave him, and set off upon his homeward way. The police station was almost at his own doors, and he had had his walk for little. Noon had

gone by before he had finished the returned journey, and he was hot and tired.

An officer sat at a small raised desk behind a sort of counter in a shaded room. In one corner of the room was a railed cage like a wild beast's den, and in the den a wild beast, in the form of a drunken sailor, who howled a song and danced lumberingly.

'Well,' said the officer, beholding Clem, 'what can we do for you? Keep that fellow quiet, one of you. I can't hear my own ears.'

Clem told his story, and the officer listened with no great show of interest until the mention of a watch with a medal and an inscription. Then he smiled, and taking up a speaking tube, whistled, applied his ear, and then murmured into the mouthpiece,

'Go on,' he said, still smiling to himself. Clem went on, and had come to the end of his story when a red-whiskered constable entered behind the counter.

'You sent for me, sir?' said the constable.

‘Yes,’ said the official, smiling still. ‘Did you ever happen to hear of a watch with a Turkish coin attached to it?’ Then the constable began to smile, and Clem looking from one to the other saw the smile broader on each face until both the inspector and his subordinate were laughing. ‘Very well,’ said the inspector, wiping his eyes—he was a fat man with a face expressive of a love for a jest and a good dinner—‘tell this gentleman what you know about it.’

‘About the man that tried to hang himself in Number Five, sir?’ asked the constable. The inspector nodded, and leaned forward on his elbows with a renewed look of humour, glancing now at the constable and now at Clem, as if with an assurance that the inquirer would see where the joke lay by-and-by. ‘Well,’ began the subordinate, scratching at one red whisker, ‘it’s a matter of five or six, or maybe seven years ago, and I shouldn’t have any call to remember it if it hadn’t passed into a sort of a joke among us. I got information as the man-

had taken passage in the "Orinoco"—I remember that well enough—and I had instructions to take him. I went aboard, and I see my gentleman in his berth with a map spread out before him.'

'Was the map a map of Turkey?' asked Clem.

'Why, yes, it was,' said the man, 'now I come to think of it. Yes. A map of Turkey. Well, he fainted stone-dead away. He was a chicken-hearted sort of fellow, and he fainted away, stone-dead.'

'Tell us that again,' said the inspector. 'By-and-by it may begin to get interesting.'

'Well, to tell the truth,' renewed the constable, 'I always had a notion that he shoved his hand into the bed just as I opened the door, but his fainting and the boat being just about to start put it out of my head I suppose, and I forgot to look for anything. But when we got him here and he came to, there was such a hullabaloo and such a racket about a watch and a medal as I never *do* remember hearing

about anything. He went stark staring mad. It was a charge of manslaughter if I remember, but he didn't seem to value the charge a button against that watch and medal. He went that off the handle, it's passed into a sort of a proverb here.' The constable grinned broadly. 'There's hardly a day goes by, but somebody says, "You might ha' lost a medal, you might." Why there's men as never heard the beginning of the story as uses that expression. It's known throughout the force, that saying is, and whenever a man goes off the handle at a trifle, *that* comes in.'

'And the watch was never found?' Clem asked.

'Never found nor heard of,' said the constable. Clem held on by the counter for a moment, and was sick and dizzy. All the dreams to have been dreamed in vain!

He saw that the inspector and his subordinate were staring at him curiously, and he steadied himself as well as he might and turned away. His heart felt dead. No misfortune

which could by any chance have fallen on himself could have so bereaved him.

‘Hi!’ said the inspector. ‘Might I ask what made that watch and medal so particularly valuable?’

‘There was an inscription on the medal,’ Clem made shift to answer. ‘It related to a sum of money. It was the only memorandum.’

‘A large sum of money?’ asked the inspector.

‘Yes,’ said Clem. ‘Fifty thousand pounds.’

The inspector and the constable both whistled, and looked at each other, with uplifted eyebrows and shoulders. Clem walked slowly away, and slowly home, if the place in which he lived were worth calling home. Bowling was there awaiting him, and when he heard the story of the failure he broke into such horrible execrations against Whittaker that Clem put his hands over both ears and ran out upon the landing.

Life had been savourless before, but after

this taste of hope it seemed flatter than ever. The days went by, saltless, lifeless. Armstrong came to him once a week at least, and found him sunk deeper and deeper into a dejection out of which he had no heart to struggle. He went on with his painting and his modelling, and his making of flowers in wax and leather, and he found some poor sort of market for his work, and lived, and that was all. His dream had lasted less than a day, and yet after it his spoiled life was lower than ever. To have made life smooth for the one creature he had loved had seemed so possible, and so sweet a thing—and now that hope had flashed upon his darkness and gone out again he saw nothing.

Bowling would come in at times to talk of the buried treasure, and would talk of nothing else. Clem scarcely heard him, and had—as may be easily fancied—but little value for his companionship. Yet he felt a little lonelier than ever when the man came in one night, and announced his approaching departure.

‘I’m sick of this village, I am,’ said Mr. Bowling, with a face of deep disgust. ‘I never could abide to live among a lot of bricks. Fields I can stand, and the rolling winds and waves I can endure, but these here houses gets into my lungs and chokes me. And into that I’ve got the sack. I’m off to sea again. I’m a old ’un, but I’m a stiff ’un, and I can hang pulley-hauley on a rope as well as the youngest on ’em. Apart from which blue water is my natural home, and I’ve been off of it now nine year.

So it’s good-bye Jack, let John sit down,  
For I know you’re outward bound, oh !

I’ve got a berth a’ ready, aboard a cap’n as knows a seaman from a long shore shoulder-rubber, as is good for nothing but to growl at his vittles and draw his pay. I’m off in the mornin’ at six o’clock, young governor, and I’m off now to rummage a bit of a kit together. So it’s good-bye now, and this is the last of Thomas Bowling.’

Clem shook hands with him, and he rolled away with a more nautical gait than ever. In a minute or two Clem heard him singing in his growling bass—

He's off to sea is, old Tom Bowling,  
The darling of the crew,  
And all the pretty gals is howling,  
And all their hearts is true.

Then he heard his step upon the stair, and Mr. Bowling had gone out of his scheme of things for good and all.

Clem never spoke a word of his disappointment to anybody. Why should he? What end could it have served to speak? Even the going of Mr. Bowling left him a little drearier, a little less inclined to life.

The summer spent itself, the autumn rolled wearily towards its close, and at last upon a day Clement Bache rose to life once more, because he had learned once more what it was to have a purpose.

He drew that poor eight weekly shillings which formed the staple of his means, for

convenience' sake, four weekly doles at once. Every fourth Saturday he called at an office in Shoe Lane and drew his thirty-two shillings from a solicitor there, who had charge of this last little remnant of his father's old estate. He called one day at the customary hour of four.

'Mr. Knight's engaged just now,' said the lanky clerk. 'You must call again at five past seven. It happens he'll be here late to-night, or you'd have to come again on Monday.' Clem lingered a little, uncertain whether he should go. 'It's not a bit of use of your waiting, Bache,' said the lanky clerk. 'I've done and I'm off, and you can't wait here, you know.'

Clem walked away submissively and wandered into Fleet Street. He was tired and hungry, and for the moment he was penniless. He wandered vacantly—nothing mattered much—he was tired. It began to rain, and he drew his seedy paletot a little closer. His mind and his heart seemed numbed, and he had no thoughts worth thinking, and no sensations. It

grew dark and he was still wandering in Fleet Street. The raw, stealthy wind nipped him at the toes, the nose, the fingers; passers-by hustled him; the rain fell in a persistent drizzle.

The clocks struck six, and he was a little hungrier and more fatigued, and if possible a little emptier in mind. The shops were all alight by now, and he stopped here and there to look at them. The minutes crawled by, shod with lead, and the quarter, the half-hour, and the three-quarters all sounded in their turn. It began to rain in earnest, and he walked with his head bent against the wind and the wet, and drew his cloak a little closer.

‘It can but want a minute or two,’ he said to himself, and stood still before a shop window to wait until the clock should strike. The shop window was a pawnbroker’s, and he looked at the various articles displayed in it, and thought (as if somebody else was thinking, he was so little interested) of his own downward march to poverty.

But suddenly he clasped his hands beneath his cloak, and his heart gave one great leap, and then seemed to stand still. For there, within a foot of his eyes, hung Job Round's medal, labelled '*Eastern Curio—Guinea Gold. With inscription. Only 2l. 5s.*'

## CHAPTER IV.

EZEKIEL ROUND sat by the fireside at Konak Cottage, in the same room and the same arm-chair in which Job Round had died. Ezekiel was thinking of nothing and looking at nothing, and smoking. His eyes were dull and fishlike, his head was pushed a little forward with a look which betokened readiness to contradict anything, his legs and shoulders were as self-willed as ever, and his red fists lay one on each thigh, as if in expectation of immediate conflict.

Sarah sat sewing at a window in the same room, but sometimes her needle and the work at which she plied it would lie together in her lap whilst she looked with unseeing eyes at the rain-beaten garden and the dim fields beyond. It was one of those days in late summer when rain can seem more desolate

than at any other time, and the atmosphere was soaked with water like a sponge. The weather was cold, and a cheerful little fire burned upon the hearth. Except for the ticking of a clock the house was so still that the patter of the rain and the rustle of the wind-tormented trees were as loud as if it had been night-time.

Whatever change had taken place in Sarah's aspect had but ripened and sweetened her unusual beauty. The arch brightness which had once distinguished her was gone, of course. The happiest marriage and motherhood—and marriage and motherhood are a woman's best felicities—would have seen that innocent bright archness fade. That had belonged to youth and youth's high spirits. Now her face was grave and thoughtful, and anyone who knew her well and loved her would have seen a pitiful brave sadness in it.

'My pipe's gone out,' said Ezekiel, suddenly. His voice had gone shrill with age, but it betokened a dogged humour even yet.

‘Shall I light it for you, grandfather?’ she asked. ‘It wants filling again; shall I fill it?’ He clung to it at first, but her supple persuasive fingers gradually released it from his hand. She filled it for him and gave it back to him with a lighted spill, and he began to puff away with a sulky gravity. With his clean shaven red face and his bald head he looked like a big baby, who had come into the world resolved to be satisfied with nothing.

‘I say,’ he said, looking at his granddaughter with lack-lustre eyes, ‘dost thee remember my son Job? He was a king among men was my son Job. He grewed after he was two-an’-twenty, and he stood six foot four. Like Saul, head and shoulders higher than his brethren. I acted very bad to my son Job. I cussed him out of house an’ home, and now I do’t think he’ll iver come back again. He wanted to marry Armstrong’s gell—the printer in the High Street. That’s what I cussed him out of house an’ home for. I knowed he’d niver come back no more, and

I knowed I was a fewl. I've allays been a fewl, or else I should niver ha' trusted my money with young Whittaker. Didst thee know young Whittaker? There's none o' th' ode folks left i' Castle Barfield i' these daysen. Things was a deal gayer when I was a lad than they be now. Cudgil playin's gone clean out. So's pidgin flyin'. The young lads ud meet once or twice a week of summer evenin's when I was young, an' have a stand-up fight i' the Warrin Lezzurs for a match. Four ud fight wi' four, an' then two ud fight wi' two, an' them two ud fight together, and the mon as won was champion. Ah! they'd come from miles around. There's no sperrit of en-j'yment left. My pipe's gone out.'

Sarah was too accustomed to the old man's wanderings to pay much heed to them, or to be greatly wounded by them, even when they touched the sorest places in her heart. She arose again patiently and gave the old boy a light, and then went back to her sewing and her own thoughts.

‘He stuck out like a mon,’ said Ezekiel, ‘and I liked him none the wuss for it, I can tell thee. But I wouldn’t ha’ let on as I admired him, mind thee, for a million o’ money. I used to see him a walkin’ along Castle Barfield high road, six foot four of him, and as broad as a barn door, an’ ne’er a bit o’ waste from crown to sole; the strongest man in England I reckon he was. He’d walk by me without a word, just a friendlike soort of a nod he’d gi’e me, but that was all; and “Damn thy eyes,” I used to say, “I love thee for it.” A strikin’ handsome lad was my son Job.’

Then he complained once more that his pipe was out, and, Sarah having again supplied him with a light, he fell into a sort of coma, and sat smoking and seeing nothing and thinking of nothing.

There were two windows to the room, one looking on the fields and another on the garden path and the gate which stood at the end of it. The side window was overshadowed by a tree,

and on this dim day the light was somewhat dull there. Sarah gathered up her sewing and set it down on the sofa below the brighter window. Then seating herself beside it she began to sew in earnest. Grandfather Round wanted luxuries now and again, and Sarah had sacrificed some part of her own small property to save the family name from the disgrace of actual bankruptcy, so that she was somewhat put to it at times to make both ends meet, and had recourse to her needle to supply deficiencies which might otherwise have grown serious. She was a skilful fine needlewoman, and the work of her hands did more to keep herself and the broken old grandfather than anybody knew.

She was sunk deep in thought, but busy all the while. Clem was repeating his own verses in the smiling summer field above the Jacob's Ladder, and her father was lying below the hedge, as yet unseen, in the lane at the end of the field. She was coming to him in her thoughts, and Clem's voice was in her ears.

Green fields and falling waters, and, afar,  
—Faint as that echo of his watery war,  
Old Ocean leaves within the twisted shell—  
The peaceful chiming of the convent bell.

Just then she heard the click of the latch gate. It sounded more seldom now than in old days. She looked up and started with a little cry, for there, buffeted and blown by the rain and wind, was none other than Grandfather Armstrong, whom she had fancied a hundred miles away. She arose and opened the door to welcome him.

‘Grandfather Armstrong!’ she cried. ‘What good wind has blown you here?’ She drew him within doors, and kissed him heartily. The grey man took both her hands and held them wide apart, and began to dandle each hand gaily in his own. He was flushed with the rain and the wind, and was a trifle out of breath.

‘I’m thinking it’s a good wind, my dear,’ he said. ‘I’m thinking it’s a good wind, but I can’t be altogether sure yet. How’s Mr. Round?’ he asked, dropping his granddaughter’s

hands, and advancing to Ezekiel. 'How do you find yourself? D'ye know me, man? Losh! I don't believe the puir man knows me, Sarah.'

'He will know you by-and-by,' she said. 'He sleeps with his eyes open, I think—poor old Grandfather Round. Let me take off your wet coat and put it at the kitchen fire to dry. Where have you come from?'

'I was in London this morning,' returned Armstrong. 'I came down straight to see you.'

'On purpose to see me,' she asked, standing with the wet garment in her hand. 'You came on purpose to see me?'

'Ay, lass! Put away the coat and we'll begin to have a talk together. I'm thinking 'twas a good wind that blew me here, my dawtie. Put wa' the co't,' he said, relapsing for an instant into his broadest accent, 'an' we'll hae a crack.'

She obeyed him and returned with a face full of expectation.

'My son Job,' said Ezekiel as she entered, 'was the strikingest handsome man i' Castle

Barfield. He was a traveller in his day, and could talk the foreign tongues, whether to the Frenchies or the Germanies, or them trapesing gipsy chaps.'

'He rarely speaks of anything but father,' Sarah said, in answer to Armstrong's eyes. 'He is breaking fast.'

'He's no complaint, has he?' Armstrong asked, speaking unconsciously in a half whisper.

'No,' she said. 'The doctor comes to see him now and then, but more for old acquaintance' sake than anything. He says he will not last long, but he has no illness and no pain. Senile decay, he calls it.'

'Ay,' responded Armstrong; 'he'll be nigh on eighty-five years of age. Poor auld lad! Eh, eh! His warldly troubles are well-nigh at an end, and I doubt he'll have no mind to be brightened at the last. Sit down, lass; I've something of the utmost importance to say to ye.'

Sarah sat down upon the sofa by the rain-

bleared window, and her grandfather, seating himself beside her, took both her hands in his. He looked bright and elated, and wide as she might send her guesses she could find no reason for his visit and his obvious gladness and excitement.

‘You must know, to begin with,’ he said, holding both her hands, and now and then lifting them and waving them airily—‘you must know, to begin with, that David is a clerk in the office of a stock and share broker in a street in London that goes by the name of Copthall Street. A while ago a gentleman makes application to this stockbroker to know whether some nine or ten years ago his uncle did or did not buy through his hands a certain number of shares—Government annuities, or what not. I’m no man for these affairs, and ye mustn’t expect me to talk like a banker, but I’ll make you as wise as I am myself. The object of the gentleman’s inquiry was to get at a certain sum o’ money in the Bank of England, as I understand, believing that the sum

had been lent to the Government of the country aforetime by his uncle. Am I making things clear to ye, dawtie, or am I befogging a fog? It's a bit of a fog to me when I come to the details, but I'm feeling clear till now.'

'I think I understand,' said Sarah, not quite knowing what to make of this exordium. 'I am sure I understand.'

'Very well. There are rocks ahead, maybe,' said Armstrong gaily, 'but we're in smooth water for the meantime. The gentleman was his uncle's sole heir, and had reason, from some memoranda in the old man's writing, to believe that he had thus disposed of a sum of money. He applies to David's master to ascertain the facts. David is set at work to search through a set of books which detail all his employer's business for the period, and he lights upon the entry. It relates to a matter of some five thousand pounds, and the gentleman's in the fairest possible way to get the money. Now I'm sure a girl with your good heart will be glad o' that.'

He laughed then, and swung her hands so gaily that she could scarce do less than give him an answering smile.

‘I am sure,’ she said, ‘I hope the gentleman may have his own and live long to enjoy it. But why are you so pleased? It isn’t you?—you have no uncle. Is it David?—no, he has no uncle either, and besides he only searched the books. Oh, grandfather,’ is it Clem—is it poor Clem? Oh, if it were Clem I should be glad indeed.’

‘No,’ returned Armstrong, ‘it’s a man whose name I never hard before. A pairfect stranger, my dear, but we’ll just be glad he has a fair chance of getting his own, for that’s no more than everyday human good-nature; eh, lass!’

‘Certainly,’ she said, looking at him with some bewilderment. His blue eyes twinkled with an innocent mirth and mischief, but all on a sudden he became serious and tender.

‘In looking through those books, Sarah, David found another name, only a page or two away from the one I’ve been speaking of. My

lass, I'm thinking ye're going to be a vary walthy woman.'

'I?' said Sarah.

'You,' replied Armstrong. 'The name that David found was your poor father's, lass. Job Round, of Konak Cottage, Castle Barfield, gentleman. And there in plain black and white was the record of a transfer out of foreign stocks—I'm not in the least understanding what I'm telling you, but this is the gist of David's statement, I'm pretty certain—a transfer out of foreign stocks into the new three per cent. annuities. That is to say, for I'll be as clear as I can, that he had sold something and bought something else. Now the actual murder's out. It's not settled yet—ye can't go up and lay hands upon the money at once, but there's little doubt ye'll get it. You're not upset in any way, or feeling faint, are ye?'

'No,' said Sarah, looking at him in grave wonderment, 'why should I?'

'Ay, ay!' returned Armstrong, 'why should ye? But there's a pretty big handful of people

in the world that would. It just made my auld head spin for wonderment and pleasure when I hard it. But ye're not a warldly-minded lass, and never were. Ye don't even ask how much it is?'

'Is it much?' she asked. Her mind was busy with other things; Clem and Grandfather Armstrong need be poor no longer. She had been told already that she was going to be a wealthy woman.

'I'll tell ye how much it is,' he said, releasing her hands to grope in the pocket of his shrunken grey coat. 'Here's David's figures. The sum transferred was ninety-seven thousand five hundred and sixty-seven pounds. The compound interest since then has been, so David says, nineteen thousand five hundred and sixty-three pounds. Altogether a hundred and seventeen thousand one hundred and thirty pounds, yielding an annual income of three thousand five hundred and thirteen pounds eighteen shillings. Upon my word, it's just a glory to pronounce the words. I've felt like a deputy Rothschild

all the way down from London with the figures in my pocket. Give your auld granddad a kiss, lass. God bless ye !’

And then, quite suddenly, the little grey old man leapt to his feet and began to foot it heel and toe, with one hand aloft and the other set jauntily on his hip, and more suddenly still fell back upon the sofa, and hid his grey old face in his hands and sobbed for joy.

‘Lass,’ he said, ‘I’m glad at heart for your sake. I’m glad at heart.’

‘But how,’ she asked him with wondering eyes, ‘did father ever become possessed of such a sum of money? And how was it that having it he never used it and never spoke of it?’

‘That’s more than I can say, lass,’ said Armstrong, ‘and more than man will ever know. But since it was Job Round’s money there’s one certain thing—it was honestly come by——’

‘Grandfather !’

‘Ay, ay, lass ! we’re just o’ the same mind

about that. It's seven-and-twenty year since your father came home from foreign parts, and in all probability brought the nucleus of this fortune with him. And it may have been increased in trade.'

'Have you told Clem?'

'Not a word. And won't till everything is fixed and certain. There's a lot to do yet, but everything's fairly certain. Safe, I should say, in the end. But here's the *modus operandi*, as David sets it down. First ye go to a lawyer, and ye give him dates and names and figures. Then the stock has to be traced in the bank books. Then they'll want evidence of your title, and ye'll have to produce—I've got it down here somewhere on the inside of an auld envelope—ye'll have to produce letters of administration of the personal effects and estate of your poor father. That ye'll get from the Probate Court, after the requisite formalities of oaths and the payment of court fees and duty. Then this grant of administration is to be lodged at the bank with evidence of identity.

Then when the folk at the bank are quite sure ye're the right person, they'll make y' advertise in the papers for the whole warld to know, so that any other claimant may turn up, and they'll set a limit of time beyond which they'll wait for nobody else, and at the end of that limit ye get the fortune. I've been a grandfather till ye from the day of your birth, and now I'm as good as a lawyer till ye.'

'And how long will it take to do all this?' asked Sarah. 'If they would make me rich enough to help poor Clem!'

'They'll make ye rich enough to help poor Clem,' said her grandfather, 'but I'm sore afraid poor Clem won't take your help.'

This was the greatest surprise which had yet befallen her, and she looked at Armstrong in bewilderment.

'Not take my help? Clem not take my help? What *can* you mean?'

'My pipe's out,' said Ezekiel, waking from his state of half-unconsciousness. Sarah arose to attend to him, still looking backward in

inquiry at Armstrong. 'Hello!' cried Ezekiel, 'who's that? That thee, Armstrong? Been a playin' at chess along wi' Job? Sarah, my gell, get me my boots.'

'Let me fill your pipe again, grandfather,' said Sarah.

'I don't want the pipe filled again,' replied Ezekiel; 'get me my boots, my gell.'

'You don't want your boots, grandfather,' she answered. 'It's raining fast. You couldn't go out if you had them.'

'Maybe I couldn't and maybe I could,' said the old man with all his ancient doggedness. 'Thee get me my boots.' He began to chuckle. 'Armstrong,' he said, still weakly wagging his head and shaking his sides with laughter, 'dost thee remember Bill Hines, the blind fiddler?'

'No,' said Armstrong; 'I've hard tell of the man, but he died before I came to Barfield.'

'Let me see,' mumbled Ezekiel wheezily. 'How ode be I? Eighty-five. Then it's over

sixty 'ear agoo. I was a bit larkish when I was a young 'un, an' full o' fun an' invention an' all sorts o' divilry. So one day I ties a bit of a ode tin kettle to Bill Hines' dog's tail. To see the dog a runnin', and poor Bill a hodin' on, you'd ha' died o' loffin. I gi'en him a six-pince after it, but he could niver be browt to think well on me again. Wheniver he heerd my voice, a speakin' after that, he'd sing out "Zekiel Round, thee'st die in thy boots." Me and ode Bill 'll have a bit of a snigger at that when I come to tell him. Get me my boots, Sarah, there's a good wench. I'll mek ode Bill's words come true.'

'Grandfather,' said Sarah, 'you mustn't talk in that way. Here's your pipe; now you must be good, and take it.'

'I want my boots,' returned Ezekiel, 'and I'll ha' my boots or else I'll know who's master i' this house!'

'Give him his boots, lass,' said Armstrong. 'It'll do him no harm to have them.'

So Ezekiel got his boots, and insisted on

having them pulled on and laced. The operation seemed to be strangely fatiguing to him, but he laughed when it was over, and was heard to mutter once or twice—

‘I’ll tell ode Bill of this to-night. We’ll have a bit of a snigger about this, me an’ ode Bill wool.’

‘He’s very strange, Sarah,’ said Armstrong. ‘I’m a little alarmed for him by this wild talk of his.’

‘He has not been himself for many weeks,’ she answered. ‘He wanders often, and says so many strange things that I have grown used to him. He is falling asleep, I think. What was the meaning of the extraordinary thing you said of Clem?’

‘I’d have been wiser not to say it,’ he said; ‘but I think ye’ll find it true.’

‘But why should I find it true, grandfather? Clem has not begun—’ she paused a little, and her beautiful bosom heaved—‘to dislike me?’ Her face clouded and paled. ‘If I couldn’t help Clem and you, where would be the use of

having money? Why should Clem refuse me if I had it to offer him?’

‘Ye must leave me to deal with Clem—, my dear—that’s all. I’ll say no more.’

‘But you must say more, grandfather—indeed you must. What have I done to Clem?’

‘Nothing—nothing, my dear. Just nothing in the wide wide warld. The puir lad’s just as friendly and as kindly disposed as ever. Now don’t think anything more about it. It’s not the least little affeer of mine, and I’m an auld fool for my pains. Now, now, now, ma dearr girl, not a ward.’

But Sarah was not to be thus silenced, and sweet as she was, she had her share of feminine obstinacy. To be told that if she were rich Clem would take nothing at her hands to relieve the bitterness of his own poverty so wounded her that it brought the tears to her patient eyes. She had loved Clem always since she could remember—dearly.

‘Grandfather, you must tell me.’ The old man saw the tears in her eyes and began to

move uneasily. 'Tell me,' she said pleadingly, and set a hand on his shoulder—'tell me.'

'Eh!' said Armstrong, rising and rumpling his grey hair, 'what a hell o' witchcraft lies in the small oarb o' one particular tear! Shakespeare, ma friend, ye'd learn that or ever ye quitted the banks of Avon. What'll I tell ye, my child?'

'Tell me why Clem should refuse to take help from me if it should come into my power to offer it.'

'The lass that will to Cupar maun to Cupar,' said the old man with a sigh of desperation. 'It's just this then. He'll take your money and you together if you're flang straight at him, but ye'll never get *that* lad out of all the lads ye know to take a penny out o' charity from the girl he loves. That I know, anyway.'

To say that this came as a surprise to Sarah seems to say but little. Both hands went swiftly to her face, and she blushed scarlet. And yet surely it was nothing of a surprise that Clem loved her. The impulse which had led

her to hide her face had come too swiftly to be repelled or considered, but she recovered from it in an instant.

‘Grandfather, what do you mean by putting such foolish ideas in a woman’s head?’

‘I’m not the sagest o’ mankind, lass, but I’ve just sense enough to be able to smell what’s under my nose. It’s eight or nine years old with him. And the talk runs in half the books ever I read that ye may trust a woman to know a thing o’ that sort. I suppose ye may, if the man tells her. Ye’ll help Clem, my dear, for that’s only natural and on the obvious face of things. But ye’ll have to find a way of doing it, for I know the heart of the lad, and its pride and its soreness, and not a pennypiece will he take that looks like charity from you, of all the women that live to plague the souls o’ men.’

‘Clem has no right to be proud with me,’ she said, almost in anger. ‘And unless Clem would share the money with me I would tell him that I would never touch a penny of it. I

would ask him how he dare keep me out of my rights in that way, for if he would not touch it I would not touch it, and I would see if he would rob me by his obstinacy.'

She was half laughing through her blushes before she had come to the end of this irresistible piece of womanly logic, and Armstrong was twinkling at her between his spectacles and his eyebrows with a look of humour which can only be described by one word, to find which we must fly to his own native language. The look and the sense of fun that created it were purely Scottish, as the word is, and the sense of fun and the look were 'pawky.' You may search the vocabularies of the world in vain; there exists no translation.

'Well, well,' he said, 'ye'll settle that between yourselves, I make no manner of a doubt. The coneys are but a feeble folk, says the Wise Man, yet they make their dwellings in the rocks.'

'And that means——?'

'That a woman's more cunning than a

coney, lass. I'm fit to talk any sort o' nonsense. But ye *can* burrow your way through that difficulty if ye care to; the coming year's Bissextile.'

Sarah laughed again, but she was still blushing.

'How old are you, grandfather?' she asked.

'Ah,' said he, 'that's as much as to say "when does a man arrive at years o' discretion?" Maybe the days of my discretion are over, but I've told you no more than the serious truth, lass, and ye must just turn it over and look at it. A straight back's a fine thing, but a pure heart's a finer. The lad's a lion, though he roars, after Bottom's fashion, like a sucking dove. A brave spirit; as gentle a nature as ever was informed with life. Turn it over, and luik at all sides of it. Here's this poor old heart,' indicating Ezekiel, 'fast growing cold, and not much longer to need the warmth of yours. Ye'll be lonely when ye have nobody to fret for, and ye're not the sort

of woman that can waste the treasures of her soul upon a lap-dog, or a parrot that can say "Scratch Polly." . . . But meantime here's serious business on hand. Will ye give me leave to go out and see a lawyer in your name? Best get the best man here, where ye're known, and where ye'll be able now and then to jog his mind about affairs. It's not worth while to waste a day, for the sooner the thing's begun the earlier 'twill be over.'

‘ Shall I not be wanted ? ’ she asked.

‘ I fancy not, at first,’ he answered. ‘ And ye wouldn’t like to leave the old man lonely. I’ll be away an hour at the utmost, and when I come back again ye’ll give me a cup of tea.’

He struggled anew into his overcoat, borrowed an umbrella, and set out. Sarah took up her sewing, and after a stitch or two suffered it to fall into her lap. The day had brought strange news.

‘ A heart like Clem’s,’ she thought, ‘ would be a better treasure than gold to a woman who loved him.’

She had loved him always, dearly. That was a matter which admitted of no doubt whatever. But to marry him was another thing.

Yet if Clem would only consent to be wealthy on that condition? If he would not even consent to part with poverty on any other condition? Grandfather Round was asleep, and she did not even breathe these thoughts to herself. Yet as they passed through her mind she blushed, and a second time she hid her face between her hands.

## CHAPTER V.

THE medal hung with its edge to the window, and Clem could see each side of it. He polished the bleared window with his sleeve and tried to make out the inscription, but the surface was aslant to the light, and glittered so that he could see nothing of it but the one word 'Rocher' and a line with these signs at the beginning of it—'42° 49'.' But there was no mistaking it. He had been suffered to handle it when he was yet a mere child, when Job came home again and would take him between his knees and tell him stories. He had found years and years ago a quaint face in the Sultan's twisted monogram, and he could see it now. But whatever aids to memory he found were altogether unconscious, and he had no need to examine them. He knew

the medal again as one knows the face of a friend.

He was a man transformed. Dingy Fleet Street vanished, and the city clerk might as well have hustled Vesuvius as this shabby little figure. For one moment the poor thing's soul went back to youth and Castle Barfield, and the sun was on the fields, and the lowing of far-off oxen was clearer in his ears than the growl of cab and omnibus wheels, and a face divinely sweet was close to his. The supremest miracle of emotion Nature chose to work that hour had his heart for its field. He sprang at a bound from the lowest night of despair to the very mountain top of morning hope.

No man can paint a hurricane, and a storm is but a poor symbol, after all, of tumult in the soul. But when the first great throes of joy were over, calm came to him and the quiet of a settled purpose. He had memories which he would not have bartered for any possible delights, and there was no thought or shadow of a thought of any benefit to himself

which might arise from this astounding accident. The memory of Sarah filled his heart. He saw her ways made smooth, and he seemed to see her, like the sun, making life bright for the poor, cheering cold hearts and gladdening her own.

The first thought that recalled him to himself touched him with an almost agonising fear. There was not a millionaire in London, knowing what he knew, who would not give twenty thousand pounds for that medal, and here it hung in a window in the very middle of London's traffic, ready for the first man who paused to buy it out of curiosity or to recognise its value as he had done. He had to tear himself away and leave it, if only for the briefest time, whilst he secured at any sacrifice enough to make it his own. As he thought thus the clock struck seven. He heard it, but still lingered. Unreasonable as the fear might seem, it tugged at his heart as he forced himself from the place and hurried to the solicitor's office in Shoe Lane.

He was panting and trembling when he reached the door, and had hard work to control himself.

‘I might have left your money with the clerk,’ said the solicitor, ‘but I wanted to see you personally. The lawyers on the other side—what’s their name? Hodson, Son, and Cave, of Castle Barfield—write me that their clients are ready to pay off the mortgage.’

‘Very well,’ said Clem, holding the back of a chair to steady himself. ‘That is what I could have wished for. I want to ask you to let me have two pounds ten shillings to-night. If you will buy the mortgage yourself you shall have it at fifty pounds less than its value, provided you can give me an open cheque on Monday. I am going abroad. I have pressing and urgent business which cannot bear to be delayed a day.’

‘Hum,’ said the lawyer, ‘you must give me a little time to think about that.’

‘You don’t make fifty pounds every day of your life,’ Clem answered. ‘Draw up a deed

transferring the thing from me to you, and you shall have it for fifty pounds less than its actual value. I will be here on Monday to sign it. I would start to-morrow if I could.'

'Haven't been robbing a bank, have you, Bache?' asked the solicitor.

'I have urgent business abroad,' said Clem. 'Will you buy the mortgage and take the terms I offer, or must I go elsewhere?'

'You pay the expenses of the transfer. Very well, I'll take it.'

'When must I be here? At ten on Monday morning? Let me have five pounds now in place of the two pounds ten I asked for. I have some debts to pay, and I can afford to waste no time on Monday.'

'You're strangely excited,' said the lawyer. 'What is it all about? Have you come in for a fortune?'

'I am going abroad,' said Clem, with an almost hysteric break in his voice, 'to take possession of fifty thousand pounds.' The lawyer stared at him. 'Pray don't keep me

waiting,' Clem besought him; 'I am pressed for time. Let me have five pounds.'

'It's all very odd, you know,' returned the man of law. 'Give me your I O U and you can have it. I have security.'

Clem gave the required I O U, received the money, and was gone, with a devouring fear that the medal had disappeared. It hung there still, and by-and-by was in his hands—his own. He hugged it to his breast with both hands, and his heart gloated over it. He walked homeward through the dismal rain as an enfranchised spirit might walk through the fields of heaven. The rain came down, and the yellow gaslights bleared through it like drunkard's eyes, and the crowd jostled him about the slippery pavement. But there were warmth and sunshine within him and widespread peace, and an unselfish sacred Hope with music in the murmur of her wings.

When he had reached his own sordid room, he lit his candle and sat down to look at the medal. He kissed it and wept over it, and

kneelt to thank God for it for Sarah's sake. He examined it over and over again until every word and every line imprinted itself upon his memory.

Latitude  $42^{\circ} 49'$ ; longitude  $21^{\circ} 32\frac{1}{2}'$ . A deep-cut sketch of a rock of peculiar form with the word 'Rocher' over it. An irregularly shaped figure with the word 'mare' within it, and a smaller sketch of the rock engraved upon its right-hand side. Then in the centre of the medal another irregular figure with these words below it—'Baba Konak Montagne. Mare au pied. Sud.' Then, below this, 'Entre mare et rocher. Ligne directe.'

He went out into the streets again, bearing his treasure with him. He hugged it in the pocket in which he carried it, and his excited mind made pictures of a thousand dreadful chances by which he might lose it. Yet all this was no more than the play of waters upon the surface when the depths lie still; and in his inmost heart he was certain that heaven had made him the messenger and the worker

of Sarah's happiness. He bought ink and paper and went back home again, and then sat down to write.

He set down his wonderful discovery and all his knowledge of the story which went before it. He knew nothing, and could therefore tell nothing, of the means by which the money had at first been gained, for Mr. Bowling, in deference to an instinct of his own, had suppressed his knowledge of the great Del Oro swindle. It had occurred to him that a man of scrupulous honesty might want to trace the original owners of the money, and he had not cared to be disturbed by any conscientious weakness of that sort. So Clem had no more to tell than that a party of adventurers had buried this money many years ago; that they had been pursued by a party more desperate than themselves and dispossessed of their fortune in the very act of concealing it, and that in turn they had been compelled to fly from justice and to leave the treasure still buried. Then he set down that

a new party, years later, of whom Job Round was one, had learned the secret, but how he could not say ; that two of them also had been compelled to abandon their share of the spoil, and that it lay there still. He transcribed the details of the medal, and went on to say that he did this in case his own enterprise should fail, for he was weak and might break down, though he believed that heaven was on his side and would guide and guard him to the end.

When he came to the close of this statement, which, though briefly and barely summarised here, took three or four hours in writing, he set down these words :—

‘ If I should fail, Sarah will find stronger and abler hands to carry out the purpose which has been too great a weight for me. But I beg you, by all the force of our old friendship, not to disquiet her by a single word with regard to this until I give you leave or until three months have gone by. You can tell her when you write that your last

news of me was prosperous, and that I am gone abroad upon an enterprise which bids fair to be a happy one. But if I should come back no more—and, though I have no forebodings of evil, that is possible enough—I should like her to know that I did what I could for her, and that I thought my life well spent in her service. If I can do this thing I shall be supremely happy, and if I fail it will be only because I have no longer the power to serve her.'

He sealed this with great care, addressed it to Armstrong, and locked it in the one drawer in the rickety chest which could be so secured; and then, stripping off his waistcoat, he opened the lining and sewed the medal within it round and round. Since his sojourn in London had begun he had done with his own hands whatever trimming and mending his clothes had required, and his lean fingers had grown as expert with the needle as they were with everything else to which he set them.

He set the waistcoat under his pillow, and laid down his head over the precious talisman it held. His heart was at rest, for, to his own mind, he had already fulfilled his mission. He had spoken of the possibility of failure because, theoretically, it lay as a possibility in the future, but every nerve and fibre denied the chances of disease and death, and he triumphed already. Since Job's death and the flight of Aaron Whittaker had come to heap undeserved miseries upon him, he had never slept so sweetly.

The morning weather was bright like his hopes, and it seemed natural that when Armstrong came to pay his usual Sunday visit that the old man should be radiant.

'Clem, my man,' said Armstrong, noting the new look of resolution and joy which shone in the hunchback's face, 'ye're changed.'

'Yes,' said Clem, 'I am changed.' He looked at the old Scotchman's friendly eyes, and, stretching out both hands to him, he went on with a tender seriousness, 'I have

been led in a way I did not know ; there are no more dark days in store. God has been good to me.' Armstrong, holding Clem's hands, dropped his head.

'Good to all of us, lad—good to all of us. There are providences that shine in this naughty world like sunlight falling on dark places. I'll have something to tell ye in a week or two, or may be less, will make your heart to sing. Ye mustn't ask me now, I'm bound down by promises, but I've had it in my mind to throw my sacred word of honour to the wind this two months past, and make you as glad as I am myself and as glad as David is. But I mustn't, though I feel as if I were swollen unto the dimensions of a balloon and fit to burst.'

'You have no news so happy or so amazing as mine,' said Clem, 'but I won't ask yours or tell my own until the time comes.'

'I'll bet you,' cried Armstrong, 'I'll bet you—what'll I bet you? I'll bet you the vary

finest set o' Staunton pieces and the vary finest imahginable boord that ever the noble game o' chess was played on, that when we come to compare notes ye'll admit that whatsoever news ye've got is no more to be compared to mine than an ant to an elephant. It's just the most majestic and astounding and—— For the Lord's sake, lad, talk o' something else. I've a gaseous accumulation within me will carry me else out o' window, and I'll be coming to wreck against the house-tops.'

'I am glad to hear your news is so good,' Clem answered. He could smile again it seemed. He could but think—if Armstrong had known, how trivial any piece of good fortune which had befallen him would seem beside the amazing incident of last night. But he kept his own counsel, and they talked of other things.

The talk was serenely happy, except when here and there the older man, who might have been thought likely to be the more sober of the two, broke into some conversational gallop,

like a young colt of a fellow whose high spirits set him to race and frolic in the fields of fancy. When the time came for him to go, he shook hands with unusual gravity, and Clem, having his own farewell in mind, would fain have set his arms around the old man's neck and kissed him. They might meet no more; who knew?

He bore the solitude that remained for him, and the time of waiting which remained, tranquilly, and was at perfect peace within. He slept calmly that night, and when morning came he paid his small debts, packed his few belongings, summoned a four-wheeled cab and drove away, carrying the letter to Armstrong with him. He would post that when fairly on his journey, but not before.

The solicitor awaited him with the deed, and he drove to the bank with the cheque he received in exchange for his signature. He bought the best map of the Balkans he could procure, and supplied himself with a revolver, a pocket compass, and a Turkish vocabulary. Theoretically he knew as much about the

town and rail and river sang to that measured refrain. The wheels of the rough and springless araba which bore him down to Plevna sang the song in their slow jolt and creak. His horse's lonely footfall as he rode from Plevna southward awoke that maddening, hurrying refrain.

He found everywhere a rough but generous hospitality, and the parting salutation 'Be with God' was always gentle if not always gently spoken. It was the rainy season then, and the roads along the plain were lines of bog running through a quagmire. He had bought a sheepskin coat and cap to protect him from the weather, and so until his speech betrayed him he passed unnoticed. His little knowledge of the language served him well, for it saved him from questioning and replies. But he learned enough to know that dangers lay before him, and the warnings came thicker and thicker every day. The land was smouldering with insurrection, and every here and there was breaking into a flame. And the Government

was heaping fire on flame, and now and then experimenting on the possibility of saving a burning town by throwing gunpowder into the midst of it.

But neither this nor his own fast-increasing weakness served to turn him by one hair's-breadth from his purpose. The power of love was on him, and it was no mere treasure of buried gold that lay before him waiting for its resurrection at his hand. It was her soul whom his soul loved. The gold was hers, and her heart should be glad of it. It should bring her a new birth and a new being. All she had loved and longed for in her girlhood—art, music, books, the power to help the poor—waited for her at his coming. It was the thought of her which made his weakness strong, and the hand of love which drew his natural heart of trembling from his breast and set the spirit of a hero there.

He rode on southward, day by day, until the rain ceased, and the clear skies shone out again, precursors of the ice and snow, and still

he rode on day by day, scarce conscious of the change. At last he came to Orkhanîè, and knew that he was near the Mecca of his pilgrimage. The tin roof of the village church glittered side by side with the white minaret of the mosque, and the muezzin was sweet with distance. The great hills towered beyond, already touched with the splendours of the sinking sun. He rested at the little khan in the straggling village street, and in the morning he mounted anew and betook him to the hills with a rough pick and a spade strapped before him to his saddle. The pass which leads to Tashkesen wound upward before him, and as he rode on the hills grew sterner and more sombre. A leaden-coloured sky and a piercing wind betokened snow.

When he had travelled some five or six miles along the pass, the winding road, ever rising higher before him, swerved broadly westward, and he knew that he had reached the spot at which he must quit the highway and betake himself to the hills. To the left,

winding along the face of the mountain, ran a bridle-path. He dismounted and led his horse by this narrow and difficult way. An eager hurry filled his heart and stirred his veins, but he had to pause many times for breath, and it was not until after nearly an hour's climbing that he reached the summit of the mountain, and could look about him on a scene of savage and desolate grandeur. In spite of the intense-ness of his purpose, or perhaps in part because of it, since it was that which strung him to so high a pitch, he paused here, blown through and through with a wild sense of domination, and thrilled by the stern magnificence of the scene. Even here he saw with love's eyes and seemed rather to feel with Sarah's heart than with his own. In some day not far distant these scenes should be open to her, and in them her soul, hitherto imprisoned, should find space to seek what joys she would.

Far below him in the valley gleamed a sulky pool. No other water lay in sight, though he could survey the scene for miles.

Already he could distinguish the form of the Baba Konak, and he could see the huge rock that lay beyond the pool. He reached the spot and found the immense moss-grown fragment of rock answer to the outline graved upon the medal. There was little verdure and no underwood about it. He tethered the horse to a dwarf oak at some little distance, and came back to the place bearing the pick and spade with him. The song of the clown in *Hamlet* came into his mind—

A pickaxe and a spade, a spade,  
For and a winding sheet ;  
O, a pit of clay for to be made  
For such a guest is meet.

He could think of nothing else but this, yet the words had no clear meaning to him.

The edge of the pool shelved suddenly, and the water lay thirty or forty feet below the top of the bank. The body of the rock was not eight feet from this edge, and it sent out a spur at its centre which reduced the space by two feet further, and seemed to point like a

stony finger to the place where the treasure lay buried.

He began to dig, and though his weak strokes made but a slow impression on the soil he laboured as men work when only labour stands between life and death. Suddenly the point of his pick caught something and dragged him forward into the hole. He scrambled to his feet and found that the pick's point was embedded in a broad piece of leather. Seizing the spade he cleared the earth away from this right and left, until it revealed itself as a broad strap connecting two cases of leather. He worked now like a madman, though the force of his strokes grew weaker every moment. One of the cases at last was cleared, and seizing the strap, he dragged it up from the place in which it had rested for so many years. When his hold relaxed, as it did from his sheer weakness and excitement, the case fell and toppled open. Within it he could see nothing but mould. He fell upon his knees and explored it with his hands. Earth, and nothing but

earth. With failing limbs and a heart that cried aloud of failure he laboured to release the second case. The same failure greeted him, but in dragging out the case he laid bare another leathern band, and his hopes revived and lent him new strength. The second band was connected, in like manner with the first, with two cases of thick leather, and these, like the first, were empty of all but mould. No! What was this? A single English guinea glimmered on the soil.

Clem sat down upon the edge of this grave of his hopes, and his heart died within him. His face drooped down and his hands covered it. The air grew white with falling snowflakes. The horse broke from his tether and wandered down the valley, cropping here and there. Clem did not know it, and would not have heeded had he known.

He sat upon the edge of the grave his hands had made, and it held no treasure save that of his own soul despoiled and broken. The snow and the night fell together. The flakes grew

larger and fell closer. The bleak wind pushed them by, and they fled at its rude touch, and whirled helplessly in fantastic circles. But they closed again in a phalanx dense though frail, and fell upon the drooping figure gently, as though they fain would build a cairn to mark the place where so much tenderness and valour lay.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE dirty Greek who kept the dirtier khan at Orkhaniè stood at his door with his hands tucked into the sleeves of his disreputable sheepskin coat, worn wool inside, and looked at the weather.

‘Athanas,’ he said to his factotum, ‘we shall have snow.’

‘We shall have snow,’ said Athanas in answer, ‘and the pass will be blocked. There is enough snow in the skies to fill up all the chinks in the hills and make a flat level with the top of the Buyuk Balkan.’

A Greek of the lower classes always lies when he can. When he cannot lie he exaggerates vilely. But beyond a doubt the coming snowstorm would be heavy.

‘Who comes here? Three horses,’ said the

khanjee. 'Hurry in, Athanas. Stir the fire—put on more wood. Light a mangal and set it in the front room. Sheitan git, giaour! Thou art slow as a worm.'

The foreigners in interior Turkey call each other foreigner by way of contempt, after the manner of the dwellers in the land wherein they sojourn.

A carriage with three horses came dashing wildly into the street ricocheting and rocketing from the broken pavement in an alarming manner. The driver was a turbaned Turk, with a swagging belly-band crammed full of pistols and daggers with curiously ornamented hilts of ancient silver. Seated within the carriage were three people, two men and a woman. One of the men was fat and round and young. The other was shrivelled and old and grey. The woman was young and lovely, and wore an aspect of simple and unconscious majesty.

'Ask if he has passed,' said the grey man in English.

The dragoman demanded—‘How far on the road to the pool at the foot of the Baba Konak can we go with the carriage?’

‘An hour and a half,’ said the Greek sulkily. He had expected customers, and was getting nothing but questions.

‘Is the road good?’

‘Good enough.’

‘Tell him,’ said the grey man, ‘to find half a dozen strong lads who are willing to go into the hills. Promise them a golden lira apiece. Tell him if we can start in twenty minutes he shall have one for himself.’

The dragoman transferred this to the Greek, but turned the lira into a beshlek, which is a quarter of its value. The Greek sped away as hard as he could go.

‘You will stay here and wait for us, grandfather,’ said Sarah. ‘We shall find him. But,’ the tears sprang to her lovely grey eyes, ‘he will have broken his heart before we reach him.’

‘I’ll not stop here and wait for ye,’ said

Armstrong, 'but I'll go with ye. Do ye think I'm that auld an' donnert I can't bear an hour or two's cold in a cause like this?'

'Grandfather! you would be mad to go.'

'Mad or not,' said Armstrong, 'I'll go, and when I can go no further I'll e'en stop where I find myself, but I'll never stop while I can lift a foot till we find him live or dead.'

'What kind of road is it from here to the pool at the south foot of the Baba Konak?' asked the dragoman of Athanas.

'Up the wall of a house a mile high,' said Athanas, 'and down a wall a mile high.'

'He says,' translated the dragoman, 'that it is not a good road. Is there a path?' he asked. Athanas not seeing his way either to lie or to magnify, contented himself with a nod. 'Have you travelled by it?'

'Twenty thousand times,' said Athanas.

'Can a woman do it?' Athanas nodded his head once more.

'The road is not good,' said the interpreter, 'but he says he has travelled by it once or

firewood? There will be dry brushwood on the hills. Perhaps if we could make a great fire the horses might be able to wait near it; they would die in the cold. And can you get blankets? They may be needed.'

'Madame,' said the dragoman, 'whatever you wish shall be done.'

The khanjee came down the street with half a dozen gesticulating Turks about him. One bore a lighted torch, though as yet it was but dusk, and all the rest carried torches in readiness. The final preparations were made, the dragoman climbed back to the carriage, and the party set out. The snow fell like a veil, and in an hour the road was so carpeted that only the jangling bells of the horses told the ear that the carriage moved. Half an hour later it was dark, and the torch shone wild on the wild figures, the circle of dazzling snowflakes, and the ringed wall of darkness.

They reached at last the bridle-path by which Clem had ascended eight hours earlier.

'You will be away five hours,' said the

driver. 'It would be death to the horses to stay here. I will return to Orkhaniè, but if I can come back I will. If I cannot get back to you I could not descend from here, and I should be useless whether I stayed or no. And if I stayed the horses would die.'

The dragoman translated, and Armstrong and Sarah were compelled to see the truth of the statement.

'You must go back, grandfather,' she said. 'I am young and strong, and with these men I am not afraid. They are brave men. I can see it in their eyes. They know the hills.'

'I'll go where you go,' said Armstrong, doggedly, but the dragoman intervened.

'This poor old man,' he said in Turkish, 'is as brave as a lion, but he cannot climb the hills; yet he vows he will go. The woman is as fit as any of you to go anywhere. Look at her. And she will go. But you must stop the old man. Tell him he will delay you and that you will not take him.'

Straightway the whole body of Turks

declared that they would not budge upon the mountain road with Armstrong, and the interpreter turned into English the reasons with which he himself had inspired them.

‘Then go in God’s name,’ said the old man, ‘and leave me here. Start away. Tell this black-avised scoon’rel here wi’ the knives and firearms to make a fire, and here I stay. I’ll not go back again. I’ll just wait here an’ say my prayers till ye return. Ye can leave a heathen with me if ye see fit, but here I stay. . . . I’ll take no harm at all.’

Since he would consent to nothing less than this, and it was undoubtedly a better thing to stay at once than to exhaust himself and give the men who were with him another burden, Sarah consented. A man was told off to keep watch with him, and he and the arabajee set to work to make a great fire, beside which the old man, buried in rugs and sheepskins, sat him down. Whilst the fire was making he watched the torch until the glistening veil of snow had hidden it from his sight. Then, the

fire being built, the arabajee drove away, and the horses' bells went tinkling into the darkness and the snow, until they too seemed swallowed up in night and silence.

'It is very good of you to come with me, Monsieur Bruyksdaal,' said Sarah, as she and the dragoman climbed the hill together.

'Pardon me, madame,' he said, 'if I say that I am delighted. I have never seen a lady so brave and so devoted. I am happy in serving you.'

'Will they find the way?' she asked him. 'I can see nothing.' He laughed.

'I would find the way myself if I had travelled it but once,' he said. 'These men are not mountaineers, but that is only because they have no mountains in this land. I was born in sight of the Matterhorn, and these Balkans are no more than a set of mole-hills after the Alps. Follow my steps, madame. Before I came to Vienna to be a courier I was a mountain guide at home. I grew too fat upon it, but I am equal to the passage of the

Balkans. You know your way?' he asked in Turkish of the nearest man.

'He who does not know his way,' said the Turk, 'had better hang himself before starting to find Baba Konak on a night like this.'

How they found their way was a wonder to any less accustomed than themselves. There were three torches alight by this time, hissing and flaring in the falling snow, but the darkness gathered round so close that they could scarce see a yard on either side, and the snowflakes, in their swift transition from dark to light, so dazzled on the eyes that Sarah often found her feet invisible and the pathway a mere hollow blank of darkness.

'You are tired, madame?' asked the dragoon. 'Shall we rest a little while?'

'No,' she answered, 'go on. I am not tired.' She said within herself, 'I shall not be tired until we find you, Clem. I shall never weary till we find you.'

'We have reached the top?' he asked one of their companions in a while.

‘ Yes.’

‘ The descent is easier?’

‘ A plain road.’

They ploughed on through the falling snow, for how long she knew not. All her senses were dazzled, like her eyes. Her wet garments clung heavily about her, yet she felt no fatigue or discomfort. There was no tumult of doubt in her mind—no hope and no fear. She walked as if in a dream in the dancing torchlight and the pitch dark and the dazzling snow, with the wild figures before and behind and on either side.

‘ We are near?’ asked the dragoman.

‘ Very near,’ one answered him.

‘ Between the pool and the rock,’ he said ; and then they plodded on again in silence. All at once they paused and one sent forth a wild cry.

‘ This is fresh earth,’ said the man who had called aloud, kicking aside the snow, and holding his torch to the ground. He called

aloud a second time, but at that instant Sarah shrieked, and leapt into the grave Clem's hands had made, and kneeling by a fallen figure there obscured with snow, set her strong arms about it and lifted it.

‘Clem!’ she cried; ‘Clem!’

The half-melted snow lay in patches on his hair and face. She clutched his hands and they were cold, but not with the chill of death. She took him to her bosom and rocked him there, and wept over him, crying again and again upon his name. ‘Clem! dear Clem! To have loved me so—to have broken your heart for this. So weak—so brave—so strong at heart. And to have loved me so!’

They drew him from her and bared his breast and arms, and rubbed him with snow until his frozen skin grew hot beneath the constant friction. The dragoman slipped a flask of brandy into Sarah's hands.

‘You would like to be doing something,’ he said. ‘A little—a very little at a time.’

She knelt down in the snow at his head and poured a few drops of brandy at brief intervals between his lips, and by-and-by the blood began to mantle in his face, and his lips to breathe faint sighs. Then they moved and she bent her ear.

‘Rainbow Gold,’ he sighed.

‘No,’ she said, and took him to her breast again as if he had been a child. ‘You brought a greater treasure here than ever you could hope to find.’

What raptures caught him when he opened his eyes and saw her face so near to his, and felt her warm kisses and her warmer tears upon his cheek and brow, were told thereafter, but to one hearer and one heart alone.

The bearded brown-faced man who waited with Armstrong in the pass fed the fire often, and in the intervals kept himself warm either by cutting brushwood or by walking up and down. The flames leaped and curled, and the

loved. And a lad that'll do that—if ye can but get him into a marriageable state again, which I allow to be a problem—is a lad that's worth any lass's marrying.'

THE END.

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